



DELHI UNIVERSITY
LIBRARY

DELHI UNIVERSITY LIBRARY

Cl. No. Y1:45113y7

676

Ac. No. 23586

Date of release for loan

This book should be returned on or before the date last stamped below. An overdue charge of 5 Paise will be collected for each day the book is kept overtime.



"Acme."

OIDA KEETON RESTING DURING HER TRIAL FOR
MATRICIDE.

CORPUS DELICTI

*An Enquiry into the Various Methods by
which Famous Murderers have Disposed
of the Bodies of their Victims*

By

DAVID WHITELOW

" I saw their starved lips in the gloom
In horrid warning gaping wide."

—Keats.

GEOFFREY BLES

TWO MANCHESTER SQUARE LONDON

1936

To
SIR PERCY EVERETT
and our fellow members
of
The Crimes Club

CONTENTS

CHAP.	PAGE
I. DISPOSAL BY BURIAL	7
II. DISPOSAL BY DISMEMBERMENT	65
III. DISPOSAL BY CONCEALMENT	96
IV. DISPOSAL BY WATER	136
V. DISPOSAL BY FIRE	173
VI. IN GENERAL	222

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

<p>OIDA KEETON RESTING DURING HER TRIAL FOR MATRICIDE</p>	<p><i>Frontispiece</i> <i>Facing page</i></p>
<p>THE DREAD OF THE SECRET POISONER. A SCENE AT AN EXHUMATION</p>	<p>14</p>
<p>WINONA GREEN, WHO MURDERED HER MOTHER AND FATHER-IN-LAW</p>	<p>132</p>
<p>THE ATTACK UPON THE SAN JOSÉ GAOL AT THE LYNCHING OF THE MURDERERS OF BROOKE HART</p>	<p>138</p>
<p>NEWELL SHERMAN, WIFE MURDERER, OF SINGLETARY LAKE</p>	<p>142</p>
<p>SINGLETARY LAKE, THE SCENE OF THE SHERMAN CRIME</p>	<p>146</p>
<p>THE BURNT-OUT CAR BELONGING TO ARTHUR ROUSE</p>	<p>174</p>
<p>THE ROADSIDE GRAVE OF THE GIRLS WHO KNEW TOO MUCH</p>	<p>234</p>

CHAPTER I

DISPOSAL BY BURIAL

"**H**OW long will a man lie i' the earth ere he rot?" How often must Hamlet's leading question to the grave-digger have passed through the tortured minds of the world's murderers in the still hours when darkness hems them in and the small voice of conscience whispers to them. For to every shedder of blood there comes inevitably the dread moment when, his revenge or hatred satisfied, he finds himself alone with the cold clay of his enemy, and knows that his victim has suddenly become an enemy indeed, a far greater peril to him in death than ever he had been in life.

There is no such thing as "the perfect murder" and there are few, very few, perfect disposals. It may well be that our cemeteries and churchyards still hold beneath the sculptured pomp of granite and marble, or in funeral urn, secrets hidden for all time from the eyes of man, but these cases are surely extremely rare. For our modern Crippens and Mahons are faced with precisely the same problems as those that faced the Dumollards and Eugene Arams of another age, and it is scarcely

CORPUS DELICTI

to be wondered at that every avenue has been explored again and again by which the *corpus delicti* may be eliminated. Earth, fire, the corrosive action of acids, transportation, dismemberment—all have been tried and found wanting. The earth yields up its secret, the furnace fails to destroy entirely, the sea gives up its dead, the railway cloak-room its ghastly deposit ; and your Thornes, your Websters and your Bastiens troop off, a grim company, to Devil's Island or the execution shed. Foul deeds will out : little dogs will scratch among the dead leaves in the tangled undergrowth of remote woodlands, and small boys will fish for tiddlers on canal banks and probe deep with their sticks the stagnant mud of weed-grown ponds. Prying busybodies will note any great volume of smoke belching forth from one's chimneys, as did the neighbours at Gambais, whose evidence was instrumental in bringing the unspeakable Landru to the guillotine. Smoke, too, as will be shown, was a factor in bringing home to Carrara the murder of Frédéric Lamarre in the house of the mushroom-grower in the rue Etienne-Dolet.

We in England are too far north of the Equator to be prone to murder. The *crime passionel* is something of a rarity among us, and in settling our differences with our fellow men we are apt to rely more on the law courts than on coke hammer or revolver. Moreover, there are but few spots in

DISPOSAL BY BURIAL

this somewhat overcrowded isle where one can, with any degree of safety, conceal inconvenient bodies from observation, for there is barely a square yard of soil that is not trodden sooner or later by the foot of man. No safety is to be found even on the trackless Highland wastes, or the heathered moors of Northumbria, and our rivers are too small and thread their way through far too densely-populated districts to be suitable channels for disposal.

In America it is different, which may, perhaps, account in part for the high average in the numbers of murders that are yearly committed in that country. True, many of these killings are the work of criminal gangs where the victim is left riddled with machine-gun bullets on his own doorstep, or bound with strands of adhesive plaster at the bottom of the East River or the Potomac or what-not, but there must be each year a thousand or more slayings in which the criminal, in an endeavour to save his own skin, is faced with the problem of disposing of that of his victim. Detection is difficult, the vast lakes, the dense forests of scrub oak and pine, the southern swamps and northern wastes and the widely-scattered communities of primitive folk, are all in favour of the criminal, but the sheriffs and the homicide squads almost invariably, sooner or later, find the body, although not always the murderer, who can in a few hours after the commission of a crime put a

CORPUS DELICTI

hundred miles between the scene of his crime and himself.

A close study of the world's criminal records will prove that the first thought of the murderer is almost invariably of the earth. To hide his ghastly handiwork from the sight of men, to say nothing of his own, he will not rest till the kindly soil has thrown a pall over the horror of his deed. Then and then only will he give serious thought to the secondary consideration, that of his own safety. This is the more surprising when one considers that at the very first suspicion of foul play the mind of authority follows precisely the same path as that of the murderer and that the police fly immediately to spade and pick-axe. Apart from this, more often than not, the grisly task of the criminal has to be performed in the open, where there is always the chance of being observed by passers-by or by inquisitive neighbours at nearby windows. Since the days of Mr. Corder and Maria Marten of Red Barn fame, criminal annals have been filled with the names of those who have had recourse to the good red earth. Dougal, Devereux and Thorne in our country, Mozok and Mortensen in the States, Dumollard, Robert, and Bastien in France, to name but a few.

Let us look into the case of Euphemia Mozok, who is at present serving a life sentence in the Michigan Big House. Portraiture taken under the distressing conditions attached to the atmo-

DISPOSAL BY BURIAL

sphere of a police office can never be altogether flattering but, even making allowance for this handicap, Euphemia would appear to possess no great pretensions to beauty although, when the lady came so prominently into the news, the reporters, scenting a good headline, accorded her the flattering title of "the Siren from Serbia." Hers was the hard, sullen face of the peasant of the Near East, where life is a grim and difficult business, and yet surely Euphemia must have exercised on the opposite sex some definite charm that has eluded the lens of the official camera. For not only did she leave behind her at least one husband in her native Serbia when, at the tender age of twenty, she emigrated to Canada, but she managed to carry on the matrimonial work with marked success on the further side of the Atlantic. Surely this suggests sex appeal of no mean order.

The first of the unfortunate gentlemen to fall beneath her sway after landing at Montreal bore the curious name of Woropchuck, but Mr. Woropchuck has, fortunately for himself, little to do with the story of Euphemia, for that lady very soon tired of him and, throwing him into the discards, smuggled herself over the border into the States, searching, as it were, for a new deal in the game of life. She was not long in finding her feet in the new land, her first capture being a man named Sokolski, a somewhat frugal gentleman who, on embracing matrimony, decided to relieve the

CORPUS DELICTI

financial situation by the taking in of a lodger. Three, he estimated, could live as cheaply as two, but Mr. Sokolski was soon to learn that the taking in of lodgers was a very risky business with a lady like Euphemia about the house. It was not long before the inevitable happened and Mr. Uderovich, the dweller within the Sokolski gates, found himself sitting extremely pretty. But that was not enough for him. How pleasant it would be, he thought, if he could lead the fair Euphemia to the altar and so dig himself into the Dyre Street household for good and all. And Mr. Uderovich seems to have lost no time in going into action. In due course Mr. Sokolski ceased to be a member of the household, the Dyre Street home knew him no more and the police were asking a few pertinent questions as to his whereabouts. But Euphemia and her young man lodger were not to be caught napping, they had their story for the authorities all ready and they stood up to the grilling through which they were put with a composure and dignity hardly to be looked for in people of their class. They told their story lucidly and having done so voiced their indignation at the outrageous treatment handed out to them.

Was it their fault, they asked, if Sokolski had chosen to desert his wife? Was it not rather a case for sympathy than for suspicion? The lady even took advantage of there being no *corpus delicti* to accuse the absent Mr. Sokolski of cruelty

DISPOSAL BY BURIAL

and desertion and on these grounds applied for, and obtained, with very little difficulty, a divorce. And from that moment Euphemia and her amorous lodger disappeared from official ken. At least for a time.

We next hear of the Serbian woman when a distressed gentleman giving the name of Steven Mondich called on the authorities with a sad and tearful story of domestic trouble. His wife, he told the police captain, had left him and he was most desirous that she should be found and returned to the nest. The officials, who had heard that kind of story before, were sympathetic but not very helpful. America was a pretty big place, they pointed out to Mr. Mondich, and if the missing woman wished to remain undiscovered there was little they could do : it was a free country. But if Mr. Mondich cared to give them a full description or, better still, let them see a picture of the missing woman, then they would throw out the drag-net for her and let him know the result. Mr. Mondich then produced from his pocket a cherished pictorial representation of himself and the lady taken on holiday somewhere in the mountains. It was a charming picture set in romantic surroundings of carefree domestic bliss but the police, the moment they saw the photograph, were not very interested in that angle of the missing Mrs. Mondich. But they were very, very interested in another angle, for the pictured face smiling up at them stirred

CORPUS DELICTI

unpleasant chords of memory. Although three years had passed since the regrettable scenes in the police office in connection with the missing Mr. Sokolski there was little doubt but that Mrs. Mondich and Mrs. Sokolski were one and the same. They asked Mr. Mondich to leave the picture with them and although the bereaved husband seemed loth to part with this one link with his punctured romance he agreed on the clear understanding that it should be kept clean and returned to him in due course. The police lost no time. Perhaps on account of Mrs. Mondich not having taken any great trouble to cover up her tracks the lady was soon run to earth and for the second time Euphemia found herself detained and questioned.

Faced once more with the prospect of another grilling the good lady waxed indignant. It was an outrage. Had she not gone through all this three years ago? Why bring all this Sokolski business up again? The man had never been found alive or dead and surely Euphemia's whole life was not to be ruined because a low-down like Sokolski had been mean enough to walk out on her. But the police, by this time, no doubt with bitter memories of their previous defeat at Euphemia's hands, were not to be put off so easily as formerly. Here was the chance they had been waiting for for three years. Perhaps, they suggested, if Mr. Uderovich would come forward they might be able to get to the bottom of a matter



The Daily Mirror.

THE DREAD OF THE SECRET POISONER. A SCENE AT AN EXHUMATION.

DISPOSAL BY BURIAL

that had been a thorn in the official side for so long a time. It was understood, they reminded the lady, that Euphemia at their last meeting had been about to bestow her hand on Mr. Uderovich and, if this had been the case, then where did Mr. Mondich come into the picture? It was all really most confusing.

It was Euphemia's obvious reluctance to discuss in any way her former lodger and lover that caused the police to extend the drag-net in an endeavour to bring in Mr. Uderovich to join the little party at headquarters. But curiously enough the man could not be found—like Mr. Sokolski he would seem to have vanished into thin air—and the questions fired at Euphemia became more and more pertinent and apparently more and more difficult to answer. Thirty hours grilling with practically no sleep and under a fierce spotlight . . . and Euphemia cracked and told the whole story.

The eternal triangle again, but with certain differences that lifted it out of the ruck. Euphemia was nothing if not original and the lady, once having made up her mind to speak, seemed rather to glory in her many and varied conquests. Mr. Uderovich had, as was only to be expected, been beneath the Dyre Street roof but a few short hours before he was at Euphemia's feet and before long, quite ignoring Mr. Sokolski's prior claims, he was expressing his desire to make her his wife. No doubt under the impression that all was fair in

CORPUS DELICTI

love and war he even held out a tentative suggestion to Euphemia that it might not be altogether a bad idea to remove the inconvenient husband from the path of their happiness. Moreover, by so doing, they would be able to possess themselves of such property as the frugal Mr. Sokolski had accumulated and for which, if their little plan succeeded, he would be having no further use. Euphemia had seen the logic of this reasoning but she had hesitated. Why, she asked Uderovich, should they complicate matters by murder? She had walked out of the lives of two or three husbands already and why not, seeing the process was so simple, do the same to Sokolski? But Mr. Uderovich, thinking no doubt of the Sokolski nest egg, was all for direct action and so when, during a drive out in the country around Detroit, Mr. Uderovich stopped the car on a lonely road and proceeded to batter Mr. Sokolski to death with a large stone, Euphemia was shocked but not altogether surprised. But, as she put it to the police, what could she do?

Moreover Euphemia took no little credit to herself in the fact that after the killing of Mr. Sokolski any feelings of affection she might have entertained towards Mr. Uderovich changed utterly. The woman's fine nature had asserted itself and she had experienced a definite repugnance to the man who had so cruelly treated her husband, "a change of heart" she called it. And so when, glowing with justifiable pride, as might

DISPOSAL BY BURIAL

one of Arthur's fabled knights, at his exploits, Mr. Uderovich duly presented himself before her to claim his reward, her finer feelings were so outraged at the idea of linking herself to a cold and callous murderer that, to put an end to his importunities, she shot him three times in the back with a revolver that happened to be near at hand and buried the body beneath the house in Dyre Street. Then, being once more free to shape her own destinies, Euphemia lost no time in fastening her matrimonial talons on to Mr. Mondich. It was her heartless desertion of this trusting male that the Siren had to thank for the troubles that now descended upon her. The most worm-like of her many victims had turned. In the solitude of her prison cell as she awaited trial the good lady must often have cursed that holiday picture taken in the mountains and bitterly regretted not borrowing a leaf out of the book of the late Mr. Uderovich. After all, dead men cannot go squealing to the police that they have been deserted.

And so Euphemia was found guilty of the murder of Mr. Uderovich and her account with the police, now three years over-due, was at last squared. Two men who were present at the trial watched the proceedings with considerable interest and perhaps with a muttered prayer of thankfulness. For these two gentlemen were Mr. George Woropchuck and Mr. Steve Mondich, the sole survivors,

CORPUS DELICTI

as it were, of Euphemia's polyandrous adventures. Only fifteen inches of earth covered the remains of Mr. Uderovich till at last the grave gave up its secret. But it took the better part of three years for it do to so.

Belle Gunness dug deeper and her farm out in Indiana was to all intents and purposes nothing less than a cemetery when she, too, met her Waterloo. Here again, in the pictured representations of Belle there can be seen no reason why men should flock to answer her matrimonial advertisements, the wording of which should have not only put any sane man at once on his guard but should have attracted to the Indiana farm the attention of the authorities. Rich, good-looking women do not need to advertise to secure partners in their affections and in the management of their spacious estates, and Belle's letters to her prospects telling them to be sure to bring all their money with them surely ought to have roused suspicion in any but a congenital idiot. But it was long before her fate overtook her and it was not till the brother of one of her victims instituted enquiries that Belle appreciated that her game was finished. The woman never faced her judges, for when the police arrived at the farm the place was a raging furnace and there is little doubt that Belle Gunness perished in the flames. Versed as the woman was, among other things, in the gentle art of insurance fraud Belle knew all about incendiarism and clearly

DISPOSAL BY BURIAL

preferred death to facing the irate relatives of the dozen or more gentlemen whose bones were found buried in her garden.

The matrimonial lure was the one chosen by the mass murderers Watson and Kiss. Watson confessed to nine killings and the number of Kiss's victims will never be known, but they certainly reached double figures. Burke and Hare, as is well known, adopted the method of disposal for profit.

One of Russia's great mass killers was a cab driver who used to wait outside the Petrograd station at Moscow and on seeing a likely victim would whisper to him that certain valuable jewels and furs had come into his possession through the families of the aristocrats who had suffered in the revolution. Tempted by the bait of a good bargain the prospect would agree to be driven to his home where he would be quickly despatched. It was only because the cabman chastised a nephew who lived with him that the crimes of this fiend were discovered, the nephew, in revenge for his beating, going to the police with the information that all was not as it should be in his uncle's home. The garden was dug up and it was then estimated that the sum total of the cab driver's victims ran well into three figures. Possibly, as these crimes took place in 1923, Russia was too busy with her own mass murders at the time to worry much about a mere hundred or so.

CORPUS DELICTI

It was a piece of clothing, a mere scrap of a red print dress, that brought John Holloway to the attention of Hangman Calcraft. Holloway, who was an employee on the old Chain Pier at Brighton, lived at Rottingdean, and, Brighton not being at that time the bright spot that it is to-day, John solaced himself with amorous dalliance among the maidens of Rottingdean. In due course it became fairly obvious that marriage was indicated in the case of one of these ladies but, pressed as he was into matrimony, John Holloway found the yoke oppressive and somewhat of a deterrent to the full enjoyment of his leisure hours. Poor Celia would seem to have had rather a rough time with her husband who ill-used her shamefully and in the end deserted her for another woman, Ann Kennett. It was Celia's natural irritation at the existing conditions that caused her death and subsequent burial in a plantation on the Downs behind Rottingdean.

Two labourers, David Mascall and Abe Gilham, in passing through the little wood were surprised to see protruding from the earth in a secluded glade a portion of red printed calico and thinking that it might be the hiding-place of the proceeds of a recent burglary in the neighbourhood they left it undisturbed and gave information to the police. It was then that the headless body of Celia Holloway was brought to light. Celia's disappearance seems to have caused no great stir in

DISPOSAL BY BURIAL

the sleepy downland village and there was at first great uncertainty as to the identity of the remains. It was a sister of the dead girl, a Mrs. Bishop, who came forward and recognised the red material of the dress. When it was pointed out to her that there might be many similar dresses in Sussex the woman produced a patchwork quilt in which were sewn portions of the same material that matched in every particular the scrap dug from the grave in the plantation. And from the identification of Mrs. Holloway it was not a very long jump to Mr. Holloway.

There were, of course, the usual denials but the finding of poor Celia's head in a house that had lately been in the occupation of John and Ann Kennett was quite unanswerable and John Holloway duly paid the penalty.

A terrible story of disposal by burial comes from Spain. There is, nestling at the foot of the Pyrenees, a small village named Prades where life runs smoothly and uneventfully and where one would hardly look to find tragedy. In the year 1876 the whole social life of Prades centred round the figure of its padre, the Abbé Dagasta, whose benevolence and charity were renowned for miles around. To his doors came on a spring morning a wayfarer who gave his name as Segundo and who craved assistance. Segundo told the usual hard luck tale and the good Abbé at once took him in as a guest at the seminary over which he

was the spiritual head. Segundo was duly grateful and would no doubt have stayed but a few days, received a little financial assistance for his further journey, and gone his way. But as ill-luck would have it he met in the grounds of the seminary a girl named Fiammetta who was a sewing maid to the nuns in the institution. Fiammetta's beauty decided Segundo to prolong his stay, and, to excuse this, he asked for and obtained the post of under-gardener. Firmly entrenched, the man now made violent love to the pretty sewing maid and by this incurred the enmity of one of the other gardeners who had hoped to marry the girl himself. There was immediately bad blood between the two men and there is no doubt but that the rival went to the Abbé with his stories of the new-comer, stories that doubtless lost nothing in the telling. Be that as it may, Segundo stood a very good chance of being sent about his business when the Abbé suddenly disappeared. He had been seen walking in the garden with Segundo, and the two seemed to be discussing the arrangement of flower beds and various gardening details for the summer. Segundo was at once suspected of having had a hand in the old priest's disappearance, a suspicion that was fanned into fierce flame by his rival to the affections of the fair Fiammetta. The garden was thoroughly searched and at the far end under the lee of a high brick wall the earth seemed to have been disturbed. As the police

DISPOSAL BY BURIAL

began to dig Segundo, who was watching them, collapsed and his confession followed. So callous was his statement that it may be given here in full :

“ On the fifth of April I went into the study to induce him to come into the garden to murder him, but seeing more persons in the room I changed my mind. The Abbé did come into the garden a few hours later but the pupils being then in the seminary I postponed the execution of my designs till next day. At six o'clock on the morning of the sixth of April, I woke up the superior and asked him to come down into the garden under the pretext that my work had now been finished and that I was ready to leave Prades. The superior walked in front of me and on arriving at the bottom of the garden near the cellar, I seized a gun which I had hidden behind a tree and fired it point-blank in his face. He tried to shout for assistance ; I then took my handkerchief and tied it tightly to prevent his screaming. I dug the grave before the Abbé's eyes and finished him with blows from my spade. I threw the earth upon him and
* “ flattened out the spot with the garden roller.”

It is gratifying to be able to state that Segundo met his death by the extremely unpleasant method known as garotting.

II

Had Henry Wainwright lived an isolated existence on a Scottish moor or among the vast

CORPUS DELICTI

swamps of Southern America no doubt some mountain tarn or oozy river-bed would have served his purpose in disposing of the remains of poor Harriet Lane. In the teeming heart of Whitechapel he had to do the best he could with the material ready to his hand and even in that overcrowded community the earth hid his crime for a full year. Like so many other murderers Henry Wainwright, when he saw the lifeless body at his feet, had thought immediately of burial. He had taken the line of least resistance and, so long as this temporary method held good, Harriet remained unavenged. It was only when circumstances over which he had no control prompted the removal of the cadaver to a new place of concealment that he was at last brought to justice.

Wainwright lived apparently happily with his wife and children in Tredegar Square, a secluded little backwater that lies behind the Mile End Road, but it is clear that the man's innate love of domesticity did not end there. For not many yards away from his home he maintained another* and unofficial love nest presided over by a charming little ex-milliner named Harriet Lane. Harriet had come from her Essex home to the great city and, after various employments, had deserted the tedium of long hours and scanty pay for the protection of the handsome Henry Wainwright and had already presented that gentleman with two children

DISPOSAL BY BURIAL

when the fate that watches over us mortals and moves the pieces on the chess-board we call life thought fit to throw a monkey-wrench into the smoothly working machinery of Henry's affairs, and incidentally into Miss Lane's as well. The cause of the trouble was not very far to seek. The anxiety and financial responsibility attached to the support of two distinct homes, taken together with late hours, convivial company and inattention to business can have but one result, and the grim spectre of bankruptcy at last faced Wainwright. The descent after that was rapid.

Poor Harriet, deprived of her protector's generous support—for it must be admitted that Henry was apparently a good provider while things were good—grew somewhat difficult and it is on record that the little lady upon occasions flew to alcohol as an antidote to her increasing anxieties concerning the future of herself and her children. And liquor only served to complicate matters already complicated enough. Harriet was turned out of lodging after lodging, she had pawned most of her little possessions and in her distress she looked hopefully to Henry for assistance. She became irritable and inconsiderate, so inconsiderate, indeed, of both his and her own interests, that she more than once had the temerity to call on Wainwright at his place of business, creating scenes that were extremely distasteful to that gentleman and which implanted in him a dread that the visits might be but preludes

CORPUS DELICTI

to other visits to his legitimate wife in Tredegar Square—and the respect of his family and his fellow men were to Henry Wainwright obsessions. It was then that the man, harassed by financial worries and the desire to preserve unsullied the respectable reputation he enjoyed in the White-chapel district, decided upon drastic measures to ease a situation that was rapidly becoming intolerable. Had Harriet been willing to come to terms she might have returned to the bosom of her family, in their cottage home in Waltham Cross, chastened but not entirely penniless. Her adventure in the big city would be over, she would have returned to Essex a soiled dove . . . but she would at least have been alive and able to look forward, perhaps, to brighter days. But as the lady proved more and more difficult and unreasonable, Henry shrugged his broad shoulders with the air of the complete fatalist, purchased a spade and pick-axe and some hundredweight of chloride of lime, redeemed from the custody of a nearby pawnbroker his revolver and, with the purchase of a few cartridges, his arrangements were practically complete. Harriet Lane's visit to Henry's place of business on September 11th, 1874, was her last.

As was to be expected, Harriet's parents wanted to know what had become of her but Henry had his story ready and he soon put that right. Harriet had left him, he informed her father, and had run off with a man named Friake and to support this

DISPOSAL BY BURIAL

story Wainwright showed Mr. Lane a telegram from Dover, presumably from the runaways, but which was supposed to have been sent by Henry's brother Thomas, who later stood by his side in the dock at the Old Bailey and received a long term of imprisonment as an accessory. Apart from their immediate relations and contacts girls like Harriet Lane are seldom greatly missed and certainly after satisfying Mr. Lane, apparently not a very difficult undertaking, Henry had nothing more to fear. It was not till a year later that his mistress was avenged.

Henry's financial affairs grew steadily worse and at last the time arrived when it became necessary for him to raise a mortgage on his Whitechapel Road premises. This mortgage afforded but temporary relief and in due course it fell in and although his creditor gave Henry ample time to repay there was at last nothing for it but to foreclose and take possession. Then Henry found himself faced with the somewhat vital problem of the lady lying beneath the floor of his paint room. A certain musty odour that had pervaded the premises of late had not unduly worried Henry knowing, as he did, its source, but it could hardly fail to attract the notice of an incoming tenant and the new landlord would in all probability think of defective drains and sewers and would investigate the source of the unpleasantness. Something had to be done, and quickly. So Henry and

CORPUS DELICTI

his brother put in a dreadful night's work disinterring the remains of Henry's late mistress and sewing them into two separate parcels, using for the purpose black American cloth and pack thread. Carrying these out into the Whitechapel Road the following morning, Henry very foolishly asked a youth to mind them while he fetched a cab from the rank opposite Whitechapel Church, surely one of the stupidest acts in criminal history.

Now whether it was faulty packing on Henry's part or undue inquisitiveness on the part of the minder is not known, but the fact remains that when Henry departed in the cab with his grim burdens, the youth, a boy named Stokes, thought fit to inform the constable on point duty nearby of the suspicions that had occurred to him. That was for Henry the beginning of the end. While a layer of earth covered the remains of the unfortunate Harriet her killer was comparatively safe and had he, after satisfying the enquiries of the Lane family, fled the country, Henry Wainwright might have died in his bed instead of in the execution shed at Newgate. Sooner or later the crime would, of course, have been discovered but, had the murderer not been afraid of the new tenant making investigations, Harriet might have remained where she was, undisturbed, for many a long day. Moreover, had Henry succeeded in reaching his destination, the "Hen and Chickens" in the Borough, where, deep in the cellars, he had prepared a second resting-

DISPOSAL BY BURIAL

place for Harriet Lane, the day of retribution might have been delayed for ever.

It will be remembered that a like fear of investigation attacked Mr. Probert after the murder at Elstree of William Weare. True, Probert had had no actual hand in the crime, but in those days the mere knowledge of the murder having taken place would have meant Tyburn, anyway. The suggestion that the body of the victim should be deposited in Probert's pond, put forward by the actual murderer, John Thurtell, raised many objections from Probert. Giggs Hill Cottage, where he lived with his family, was only a stone's throw from the pond, and, moreover, his tenancy had, as had Wainwright's in the Whitechapel Road, become somewhat uncertain. Probert, too, had suffered severe reverses in his business of card-sharpping and the profits accruing from the running of his illicit still had of late been sadly falling off, there was talk even of the landlord of Giggs Hill evicting his tenant and himself taking possession. The sharing out of the booty from the murder had done little to ease the financial situation as it was understood that the main portion of the money carried by the victim had been secreted away by the double-crosser Thurtell as his own share before there was anything in the nature of a division of spoils. It was only on the definite understanding that the murdered man's presence in the Giggs Hill pond should be but temporary that Probert

CORPUS DELICTI

at last gave a grudging assent. Later the body was taken from the pond and carried to a larger one near Elstree, where it was deposited and where, shortly afterwards, it was discovered. When the Bow Street runners became busy Probert saved his skin by turning King's Evidence, but here again the arrangement was but temporary, Probert being hanged shortly after Thurtell for horse-stealing. Thurtell himself, the actual murderer of Weare, was, it will be remembered, hanged at Hertford.

Poor Harriet Lane had been as sharp a thorn in Henry Wainwright's side as had William Weare in Jack Thurtell's, but elimination and subsequent disposal did little in either case to ease matters for the killers. The thorns in the side merely became more poignant. There are a thousand and one ways by which a living entity can be quietened : bribery, promises, threats—but one cannot argue with a corpse or reason with a departed spirit. With the passing of breath the victim comes into his own and one can almost imagine William Weare and Harriet Lane, lips curled back from teeth in a sardonic smile, as though in death they were grimly enjoying the predicament in which they had placed the gentlemen who had robbed them of life. Theirs at last was the victory. . . .

Legitimate burial has times without number been brought into play by murderers, although there must be for ever hanging over their heads

DISPOSAL BY BURIAL

the dread of exhumation such as brought Armstrong, Seddon, Chapman and a host of others to the scaffold. The rigidity of the laws with regard to cremation has closed many an avenue to the killer, robbing him of the sanctuary of the funeral urn and leaving him but one protection by law in the matter of concealment: the grave. One can imagine the relief that is felt by the criminal as he hears the dull thud of the earth on the coffin-lid of his victim, listens to the droning of the burial service. With what joy he must watch the erection of the granite slab setting forth the virtues of the departed and, he hopes, sealing up his secret for ever. Little does he visualise the possibility of a night-shrouded cemetery with canvas screens round a grave, the smell of newly-turned earth and the dim light of lanterns as the officials from the Home Office and Scotland Yard go about their lawful occasions. It seems strange that your killer, once his victim is battened down by the graveyard soil, does not at once either change his venue or his tactics. Surely Herbert Armstrong, after seeing his poisoned wife decently buried according to the forms of law, could have found other places where his undoubted qualities as a solicitor could have found scope. Why should he elect to carry on his work of destruction of life in so small a township as Hay with rumour and gossip as his continual companions? Why could not Chapman be content to leave the unfortunate Mrs. Spink

CORPUS DELICTI

and Bessie Taylor in their respective graves at Leyton and Lynn and change his tactics with Maud Marsh? Did antimony obsess him as bath-tubs obsessed Joseph Smith? Why go on in the same old way, using the same old methods that must some day inevitably bring them to justice? The answer is that, fortunately for the forces of law and order, your real murderer seems to be possessed of a one-way mind in which originality has little or no part. Therein lies the comparative security of John Citizen.

Chapman was a cosmopolitan, he knew the Continental cities and their underworlds, he had lived in America and in those days when passports were either unnecessary or easy to obtain he could surely, had he possessed the elements of intelligence, have escaped the rope for longer than he did. The late William Le Queux in his memoirs *Things I Know* tells a strange story that may, in some vague way, link up with the fiend George Chapman. He tells of a document that was handed to him by an official of the Kerensky government after the death of Rasputin ; it had been found in a cellar of the monk's house, and was supposed to have been written by the sinister mystic himself. It is difficult to attach credence to this amazing document and it would hardly be worth while quoting from it but for the vague connection it has with Chapman. Le Queux tells how this story was given to him by the official in order that he might use it in the

DISPOSAL BY BURIAL

life he was at that time writing of Rasputin. Here is an extract from the document for what it is worth :

London was horrified by the evil work of a mysterious criminal known as Jack the Ripper, who killed and mutilated a number of women of ill-repute in the East End of the city. The repetition of the appalling crimes mystified the whole world and the true author of these atrocities was disclosed by a Russian well known in London named Nideroest, a spy in the Russian Secret Service, who was a member of the Jubilee Street Club, the Anarchist centre in the East End of London. One night in the club the identity of Jack the Ripper was revealed to him by an old Russian Anarchist, Nicholas Zverieff. The mysterious assassin was Doctor Alexander Pedachenko, who had once been on the staff of the Maternity Hospital at Tver, and who lived in the Mullionnaya but who had gone to London, where he lived with his sister in Westmorland Road, Walworth. From there he sallied forth at night to Whitechapel, where he committed his secret crimes. Alexander Pedachenko, according to Zverieff, was aided by a friend of his named Levitski and a young tailoress called Winberg. The latter would approach the victim and hold her in conversation, and Levitski kept watch for the police patrols while the murders and mutilations took place. Levitski who had been born in London, wrote the warning post-cards signed "Jack the Ripper" to the police and the Press. It was through Levitski that Zverieff knew the truth. On his return to Russia the doctor was caught red-handed attempting to murder a woman named Vogak and was eventually sent to an asylum, where he

CORPUS DELICTI

died in 1908. Such are the actual facts of the Jack the Ripper Mystery.

One can almost suspect Le Queux of mixing fact and fiction or writing with tongue in cheek, but there are certain points in his story which bear looking into. A close study of the evidence and the rumours connected with the Whitechapel murders certainly link up Chapman with the series of atrocities and point a definite finger of suspicion in his direction. Chapman's real name was Kloskowski, and he was a native of Poland ; Le Queux's Pedachenko was a Russian. The girl Winberg in the story was a tailoress ; one of Kloskowski's friends who was closely questioned by the police at the time of his arrest was Lucy Bladerski, the sister of a tailor. The Jubilee Club in the story is balanced by a Polish Club in the Kloskowski proceedings. Kloskowski had been attached to a hospital in Poland ; Pedachenko to a similar establishment in Russia. Chief-Inspector Aberline, who handled the Ripper murders, was more or less convinced that in arresting Kloskowski, or Chapman, they had also arrested Jack the Ripper. To pursue the matter a step further the first Ripper murder, that of a prostitute named Mary Ann Nicholls in Thrawl Street, Spitalfields, was committed on August 31st, 1888, the year Severin Kloskowski arrived in England, where he took up residence in Whitechapel. The description given

DISPOSAL BY BURIAL

to the police of the supposed murderer of the woman Kelly, in November of the same year, fits Kloskowski like the proverbial glove. Moreover, during the time that Kloskowski was in America in 1900, the Ripper murders ceased in London, although similar crimes were reported from Jersey City, where the Pole had opened a barber's shop. Coincidence, perhaps, but surely significant.

III

Now we come to Martin Dumollard, another gentleman who was accorded quite a prolonged breathing space while the kindly earth hid from the eyes of the world his series of atrocious crimes. Dumollard was a peasant living near Lyons, a hare-lipped repulsive brute, whose habit it was to seek his prey among the country girls who came to the city in search of employment. He would station himself on the Guillotière Bridge, or in the principal squares of the town and, on picking out a likely victim, would begin his operations. He himself would be dressed sombrely, as befitted a servant of the upper class, and his manner of approaching his prospect left nothing to be desired. Practice had made the man perfect and in spite of his facial handicap he had managed to acquire an ingratiating manner. Lifting his hat, he would ask the girl if she would be so kind as to direct him to a registry office. He would volunteer the infor-

information that he was the steward of a lady living in a château in the country and that, unfortunately, a housemaid who had been with his mistress for years had left to be married, and he had been sent into Lyons to engage a girl to fill the vacancy. He would dilate on the amenities of his situation, the excellent wages paid, the good living and ample leisure afforded the staff and would, perhaps, mention the munificent *dot* that the mistress had so generously given to the maid who was leaving. If he had judged correctly the type of girl to whom he addressed himself—and Dumollard made but few mistakes—his work was all but done. Small wonder that the girl, dazzled at the prospect of entering so lucrative a service, fell into the trap so cunningly laid for her. Could she not save monsieur the trouble of going on to the registry office? She herself had come to Lyons in search of a housemaid's place and would be glad to enter the service of his mistress. But Dumollard would hesitate, there were the matters of character and references to be thought of, but if the girl would accompany him to his mistress and bring her box with her, he had no doubt that these little matters could be satisfactorily arranged. Dumollard was yet to learn that one could take the pitcher to the water once too often. That once was when he accosted Marie Pichon on the Guillotière Bridge.

Victorine Perrin, Marie Buday, Olympe Alabert, Marie Curt—these are some of the unfortunate

DISPOSAL BY BURIAL

young women who had preceded Marie Pichon. They and others had accompanied Dumollard into the country to interview his mythical mistress, taking with them their boxes containing their few possessions ; some of them had escaped with their lives, some were never again heard of. But Marie Pichon declined to follow suit, and made her escape when she saw that the man had put down her box that he had obligingly offered to carry for her and was about to attack her in the lonely country district to which he had conducted her. Young and fleetfooted, she easily out-distanced the heavily-built, middle-aged man, and it was the story told by Marie Pichon and, a few days later, the discovery of a body buried in a shallow grave deep in the heart of Montaverne Wood, that set the countryside ablaze.

And now the authorities acted with a vigour that, had it been exercised earlier, would undoubtedly have saved many young lives. Suspicion fixed upon Dumollard and his wife almost at once, for here again the man had never altered his *modus operandi* and there were many who came forward to speak as to seeing the man loitering on the bridge accosting young women. Moreover, the man bore an unenviable reputation among his neighbours by reason of his surly and taciturn manner, and perhaps those neighbours had been waiting for just such an opportunity that now offered. Dumollard and his wife were arrested and, faced

with the eternal questioning of the police, the woman broke down and told the whole ghastly story that set the official spades to work. Not even Madame Dumollard knew the exact number of the murders committed by her man and neither, it was supposed, did Dumollard himself, to whom a murder more or less was a matter apparently of little moment. But the subsequent search of his farm and the outbuildings brought to light over a thousand articles of feminine wearing apparel such as are worn by the peasant girl class and of these not more than five per cent were identified by the relatives of their owners. The inference is fairly obvious. The precious couple made a poor showing in the dock, each trying to blame the other for the actual killings. Madame was sent to prison for twenty years and her husband to the scaffold to which grim erection, some years previously, his father, likewise a murderer, had preceded him. It is not often that the grave holds its secret for a period as long as that accorded to Martin Dumollard. Euphemia Mozok was, as has been told, allowed three years' respite, Wainwright only one. Dougal of the Moat Farm had four years of comparative immunity from suspicion during which the unfortunate Miss Camille Holland lay buried in the plantation. Bastien's and Robert's garden soil held the law at bay for ten years which must surely constitute something of a record in the history of disposal by burial.

DISPOSAL BY BURIAL

It is a sordid story, this of Bastien and Robert, a story such as Zola would have loved to write. A family in the rue des Maturins consisting of a widow, a half-witted son and a daughter married to a dissolute and brutal son-in-law : there is fertile soil, here, for tragedy.

Madame Houet was possessed of considerable estate left to her by her late husband and it was this, taken in conjunction with his mother-in-law's robust health, that suggested to Robert that, so far as he was concerned, the good lady would be of far greater use to him dead than living. For by law, on the death of Madame Houet, some thirty thousand francs would pass to her daughter which, according to Robert's way of looking on things financial, meant passing from his wife's pocket into his own. In conversation with his friend Bastien, an unsavoury hanger-on of the Boulevards, the delicate subject of his mother-in-law's demise was at times touched upon and it was Bastien who at last suggested that dreams might possibly be made to come true. If he was promised a substantial slice of the thirty thousand francs then Bastien would help his old friend Robert in every way possible. And so, over a bottle of red wine in their favourite tavern, the bargain was struck and the necessary preliminaries put in hand without further delay.

First a house that had stood empty for some years was rented in the rue Vaugirard, a house to which

CORPUS DELICTI

was attached a garden surrounded by high walls and with lawns knee-deep in rank grass and undergrowth. Here beneath an old apricot tree the two men dug a grave, working by night and without lights for greater safety. But at that time the rue Vaugirard was a lonely spot, more or less deserted after dark, and there was little danger and so the work was speedily and ably executed. The next step was to invite his mother-in-law to inspect his new house and here Robert excelled himself in exercising a courtesy and politeness that one would have thought Madame Houet would have distrusted. He even went so far as to send Bastien in a carriage to fetch the good lady and it is suggested that he may have hinted at repayment of certain monies borrowed from his accommodating mother-in-law as an additional lure. Be that as it may Madame Houet evidently suspected nothing and accompanied Bastien to the rue Vaugirard where she was promptly strangled and put underground beneath the apricot tree. Then Robert and Bastien returned to Paris and to their homes to wait with what patience they could for the news to leak out that Madame Houet had disappeared.

It was not long in coming. Neither was the arrest of Bastien and Robert, who at once fell under suspicion. The lady had been seen entering a carriage in which Bastien had been seated, she was her son-in-law's creditor to a large amount and heir-at-law through his wife to a portion of

DISPOSAL BY BURIAL

the widow's estate, and it was known that there had been bad blood between them for some time. Opportunity and motive here marched hand in hand. But French law demanded the production of the *corpus delicti* in a charge of murder and here the thugs knew that they were on perfectly safe ground. No one save themselves knew of the house in the rue Vaugirard, so secretly had they gone about their preparations, and the result was as expected. They were acquitted and at once set legal machinery in motion to claim the widow's property. But here they met an irritating opposition from the authorities. Although the police did not put it in so many words it was made perfectly clear to Robert that the only way to collect the money was for them to produce the corpse. Otherwise how were the police to know that the good Madame Houet was dead? And if the lady was not dead, how could they touch her property? Of course everything would be quite all right in the long run, but they would have to wait ten years before the law would admit that the Veuve Houet was dead. The authorities were sorry but, well, that was the law.

And so, with the estate of the widow thrown into the French equivalent of Chancery, Robert was faced not only with his own difficulties but with those of his confederate Bastien. It was not long before this latter gentleman began to make himself thoroughly objectionable. He had done his job

CORPUS DELICTI

well and it was distinctly hard on him that he should have to wait ten long years for his money. He pointed out to Robert that he might even die in the meantime. After all, business was business. And so Monsieur Bastien set out on the thorny path of blackmail and proceeded to bleed poor Robert white. It was not till the latter reached the final franc of his resources that Bastien played his trump card. At the time of their acquittal the verdict had been that there was nothing against Bastien but that Robert was only released *for the present*. To Bastien's confused thinking this could mean but one thing, that while he himself was immune for ever from re-arrest, Robert could be taken and again charged with the murder of the widow at any time. And, being the sort of man he was, Bastien decided, now that his victim was no longer of the slightest use to him financially, it might be as well to be quit of him altogether. It would at least satisfy the deep hatred he had of his accomplice if he sent him to the guillotine.

So one fine morning Bastien, with his fingers figuratively crossed, walked into the police office and told the whole story of the rue Vaugirard. Quite frankly he admitted his share of the tragedy, making it quite clear that it was Robert who struck the death blow, he told the commissioner that he himself, having been acquitted of the charge of murdering Madame Houet, was in no danger of being again arrested on the same charge. And

DISPOSAL BY BURIAL

then, having heard his story, the police said that now they'd tell *him* one. It was sad hearing, that story, for Monsieur Bastien, and it led to the second appearance of the two rascals in the dock. Bastien's indignant protests that they couldn't do a thing like that to an acquitted man met with the contempt they deserved, the authorities being far more concerned with a certain walled garden in the rue Vaugirard than in Bastien's curious misreading of the laws of France.

Then the spade work. There was quite a party in the rue Vaugirard. Monsieur Orfila, Dean of the Faculty of Medicine, was there and with him Monsieur Dumontier, a professor of anatomy. The police officials were there and a fair sprinkling of the Municipal Guard. And to complete the party, Robert, securely handcuffed to his old friend Bastien. On a table set out under the branches of the apricot tree there were papers and a plan of the garden. The accused men stood shivering in the sharp air of the April morning as the policemen dug and sounded every yard of the garden. The body of Madame Houet with the strangling cord still about her neck was duly unearthed and it was found just in time for there is, or was at that time, another aspect of the French law with which Bastien and Robert seemed to have been unacquainted and that is that if for ten years a murder is undetected there can be no arrest for that particular crime. So says the Code Napoleon.

CORPUS DELICTI

Ten years—Robert's unlucky number, surely, for had the body of the murdered woman lain undiscovered for a few months longer, not only would the murderers have been exempt from arrest but they would have been able to lay their hands on the poor woman's money. Fate certainly turned a pretty trick on the two thugs of the rue Vaugirard when Bastien, in petty spite, denounced his accomplice.

But neither Robert nor Bastien had any call to quarrel with their luck. Not only had they enjoyed nearly ten years of comparative immunity from arrest, but, for some obtuse reason known presumably only to the learned judge who tried the brutes, the killers of Madame Houet were allowed extenuating circumstances and in due course they set out for Devil's Island, Bastien still loudly protesting against his conviction as being a shameful miscarriage of justice.

There must be but few spots on this old earth of ours where human passions have run riot at greater speed and variety than at Cripple Creek. For where gold is, there will be gathered together all the wickedness of mankind. Since the discovery of the heavily laden lodes in 1890 the total value of the yield of the precious metal in Cripple Creek has exceeded seventy million pounds sterling. Fire has at times all but razed the place to the ground, murders have been rife and robberies of everyday occurrence, it has been the scene of

DISPOSAL BY BURIAL

the greatest gold mining strike in history and during prohibition the surrounding mountainous district of the Rockies was one of the centres for the illicit trade in liquor. And the head of this particular branch of law evasion was one Charlie Neal, ex-convict, racketeer, swindler and all that was bad in a district ever notorious for its bad men. It would have been thought that the police, when the body of a woman was found buried and burned on the mountains in the delectable vicinity of Cripple Creek, would have begun by questioning Charlie Neal, but they do not seem to have done so. In the first place considerable difficulty was encountered in identifying the body, and the authorities were side-tracked to a great extent by the medical report which stated that the victim was a woman of about thirty years of age. As a matter of fact, when identification was at last established, the age was proved to be fifty-five.

In this case the combined action of burial and burning as a means of disposal all but saved the murderer from capture. It seems that his original intention had been to soak the body of the unfortunate Ida Hanson in petrol and destroy it by fire alone, but it is supposed that the leaping flames of his dreadful bonfire scared the man and that he hastily beat out the conflagration he had started and buried what remained of the woman in a hastily dug grave. It was the protuberance of one of the victim's legs that pointed to the crime.

CORPUS DELICTI

But, bungled as was the disposal of Miss Hanson, it served its purpose to the extent of giving a breathing space to Mr. Neal, for the body was discovered on June 4th, 1933, and Charlie Neal did not face the murder charge till October 19th the following year. The evidence at that trial brought to light an amazing career of crime, for Neal, when he saw that prohibition was about to be repealed, had changed his tactics and had devoted himself mainly to the swindling of widows and spinsters who were possessed of fat banking accounts and susceptible hearts. The pictures of this rascal do not suggest that he was the owner of any great charm but he seemed to have had a way with him sufficiently to serve his purpose. There is little doubt that he had, while engaged in transferring her fortune to his own pockets, promised to marry Miss Hanson. In fact the woman had confided to a mutual friend that she was not yet quite sure whether she would marry Charlie Neal or not.

It is quite possible that Neal's method of disposal might have been entirely successful had he been more careful as to detail. It is the old story of crass stupidity, for not only had the man failed to dig deep enough, but he had buried with the body of his victim a portion of a Paisley shawl, and it was through this article of apparel that identification was at last established. For the shawl had been a family heirloom and at some time in its career

DISPOSAL BY BURIAL

had been cut in half, one portion being given to Ida and the other retained by another member of the Hanson family. This, and a curious dental formation that is not found in one person in twenty-five thousand, completed the case against Charlie Neal. It may be noted that Neal employed a method of covering up his victim's tracks that may possibly have been borrowed from Patrick Mahon. It will be remembered that the Crumbles murderer caused Miss Kaye to write letters stating her intention of proceeding abroad to get married, and Neal adopted precisely the same method of putting the friends and relations of Ida Hanson off the track. For some time the production of letters, undoubtedly in the dead woman's handwriting and posted after the discovery of her body, held up the identification process, one telegraph message being so worded as to suggest that the woman intended making a prolonged stay in South America.

Although the prevalence of murder in the States may be attributed in part to the comparative simplicity of, at least, temporary disposal, it can also be explained by a reference to the list of names of those who go to the death house. Germans, Serbians, Poles, Italians and Sicilians, these dominate the charge sheets. Almost every other gangster seems to possess an Italian or Sicilian family name, and when one remembers that Sicily and Calabria are, or rather were, the spiritual

CORPUS DELICTI

homes of the Mafia and kindred murder societies it is perhaps hardly fair to blame America as a country. We have heard what Euphemia brought with her out of the darkness of Serbia ; now we will deal with Guiseppe Guilino who hailed from Calabria.

Guiseppe lived on a farm in Maryland. He had a large number of children, among them being a youth of eighteen named Vincent who had proved somewhat of a rebel to the strict discipline of parental rule. For Guiseppe considered it the duty of a true Calabrian to rule his house as he wished, demanding unhesitating obedience and loyalty from his offspring. But Calabrian ideas do not thrive upon the soil of free America, and Vincent appears to have been far more American than Calabrian in his outlook. It is small wonder that what had satisfied the emigrant father in the old days failed to satisfy the Americanised son and the few starved acres cultivated by the old man became for Vincent a prison hemming him in and killing all ambition for a fuller life. There was considerable friction and it was during one of the eternal quarrels between father and son that Vincent, losing his temper, seized a cup of scalding coffee and threw it in his father's face. This story was told to the police when, a few days later, one of Vincent's brothers notified them that the boy had packed a suit-case and disappeared without a word of farewell to any of them. Questioning as to the

DISPOSAL BY BURIAL

outcome of the quarrel during which the coffee throwing incident had taken place, the police were told that old Guiseppe had shown a commendable restraint and had not even raised his hand against his son. It was no doubt due to contrition that the boy had decided to shake from his feet the dust of a home in which he had so disgraced himself and outraged his father's cherished traditions. The police were not very interested. It was an old story ; these things were happening all the time ; sons yearning for a brighter life were flocking from the country into the towns ; daughters were leaving home every day. It was Guiseppe's fault anyway. . . .

They made a cursory examination of the house. Vincent's bedroom was in order and nothing was missing but the suit-case and the boy's clothes. Then, promising that they would send out messages to round up the runaway, they were about to depart when one of the policemen noticed that the daughter of the family was regarding old Guiseppe with what he thought to be horror. A beautiful girl of about Vincent's age, she was standing back in the shadows of the room, her great black eyes fixed on her father's face and there was something in the girl's look that suggested to the officer that she might repay further questioning. Little by little they drew the terrible story from her, a story that fastened suspicion on Guiseppe and he, too, was questioned.

CORPUS DELICTI

Old Guiseppe, faced with the evidence against him, made no effort to conceal his crime. Almost he gloried in the fact that he had upheld the ancient law of Calabria by which a son who dares to raise his hand against the author of his being is not allowed to live. He had raised neither hand nor voice during the quarrel with Vincent, but his heart had been full to overflowing at the boy's affront to authority. When darkness fell he had gone to a lonely spot on his farm and there he had calmly dug a grave in readiness for his son. Then with a sledge hammer he had battered the boy's head in while he slept and carried the body in a wheelbarrow to the place of burial. Once again earth had been called in to aid a killing. Under the supervision of the police the old Calabrian himself was forced to dig up the body of the murdered boy and reconstruct his hideous crime. That the murder could have been committed without the knowledge of others in the house is unthinkable, but it was proved that the children had been cowed into silence by the example of parental discipline they had witnessed and were, no doubt, scared that they themselves might suffer a like fate. Guiseppe faced his judges in due course and was sentenced to eighteen years in Maryland Penitentiary, a sentence that he failed entirely to understand. Surely he, a good Calabrian, had the right to carry out his country's primitive law, a right to administer that law to his own children.

DISPOSAL BY BURIAL

Like Bastien, old Guiseppe, considered his incarceration to be a gross miscarriage of justice.

A somewhat similar case was that of Wienchowski. Here again we have the picture of youthful America growing up side by side with age-old European traditions. Joseph Wienchowski farmed a few acres in Northern Michigan and the small frame house with its huddle of half-ruined outbuildings was to him his whole world, a world with which he was perfectly content and with which he expected his family to be equally satisfied. Joseph's second wife, a Polish woman who could speak no English, could hardly be expected to make the place ideally homelike for her seventeen-year-old stepson Gregory, American-bred and educated, who, by the way, is said to have been a headstrong youth with a craving for the larger and more spacious world that lay beyond the rail fence of his father's farm.

There were between father and son many instances of quarrels more or less bitter, but no thought of tragedy hovered over the home of the Wienchowskis. Joseph was well enough liked, and Gregory was regarded as being just another of the youngsters kicking their heels around after the day's work was done, loafing through the woodlands, dreaming their dreams and beating against the bars of their prison homes.

And then, on a March morning in 1935, Gregory was found dead, half submerged in a ditch in the heart of the forest. The body was taken to the

CORPUS DELICTI

morgue and the police visited the Wienchowski farm to glean what information they could as to Gregory's movements prior to his death. That the boy had been brutally murdered admitted of no doubt. The children could tell nothing, for they were only youngsters, the Polish mother could, as has been said, speak no English, and the father, although he expressed his willingness to assist the police in every way, was not very helpful. Gregory had finished his work on the farm, Joseph said, and had then gone out but he had not volunteered to say where he was going. But if Joseph was not helpful he was quite ready to give his opinions for what they might be worth. Maybe, he said, his son had been run over by a car and knocked senseless into the ditch, maybe he had been robbed. . . .

One by one these suggestions were eliminated from the enquiry. Who would trouble to rob a boy who had never been known to carry more than a few cents on him, grudgingly doled out to him by his frugal parent? And if he had been knocked into the ditch after a motor-car accident surely he would have breathed for a little while. But there was no sign of water having entered the lungs. And then it became quite obvious to the police that Joseph Wienchowski was lying on several points on which he had been questioned. Till then, no suspicion had attached to the man, but now questioning became grilling, and deeper

DISPOSAL BY BURIAL

and deeper into the mire of deceit sank the Polish emigrant. There was a little matter of a mortgage on the farm and an insurance on Gregory's life that would more than clear it. There were certain marks in the barn and in the cart which Wienchowski used in his business that might be, as Joseph said they were, stains of pigs blood, but then again they might not. The grilling increased in intensity as the police saw the man weakening.

He was taken to the morgue again and again to view the body of his murdered son and on the occasion of the visit that was to wring from him his confession, he was handed a gardening fork and asked to see for himself if the prongs of the fork did not fit in strangely with the wounds on the boy's head. It was too much for Joseph Wienchowski. He threw the fork from him and buried his face in his hands. Then, brokenly between sobs, he told his story. It was a story very similar to that told by Guiseppe, a quarrel between father and son, abuses and recriminations. Joseph swore that the first threat of violence came from Gregory, and that in taking up a hammer that lay ready to hand the elder man had acted only on the defensive. It was then, the father said, that Gregory attacked him with the gardening fork. At that Joseph had applied the hammer to good effect, raining blow after blow on the boy's head till he fell. Then, to make sure, the father had given the *coup de grâce* with the fork that had fallen from his son's hands.

CORPUS DELICTI

For a whole day the body had lain in the barn and then, under cover of night, Joseph had taken it in his cart to the forest and deposited it in the half-filled ditch. He told the police that he had offered up a little prayer at the side of his dead son and had then driven back to the farm. A week of liberty was all that concealment of the body allowed to Joseph Wienchowski. For the rest of his life he will be but a number in Jackson State Prison.

And on a par with the sordid stories of the Pole and the Calabrian is that of the Italian. Listen to the story of Antonetta and Raimondo. Although the very names set one thinking of medieval lovers, of Aucassin and Nicolette, Paolo and Francesca, there is little romance in the sordid story of love and murder that is here told to illustrate still further the superstition that has been imported into America through the agency of her immigrants. If for New York we substitute the crooked alleyways of Florence, if for "Hoboken Kitty" we substitute Messer Corvinus or any of the merchants who plied a trade in poisons and love philtres in the days of ancient Italy, if for the thugs "Dutch" and MacNamara we picture two cloaked assassins lurking in a Florentine arcade we have a far more fitting background for the tragedy of Gregorio.

For when the passionate love of Antonetta for her young man lodger Vito Raimondo had grown beyond control the couple thought at first of

DISPOSAL BY BURIAL

eliminating the unwanted husband by means of witchcraft, in which they appear to have had a firm and unswerving faith. First Vito melted down a small wad of cobbler's wax and fashioned it into a clumsy impersonation of Antonetta's spouse, Gregorio. Then through the heart of this waxen image he pierced a sharp needle, placed the wax in a safe place to cool and hoped for the best. But whatever this childish method may have meant to Antonetta's forebears in Naples, or Milan, or what-not, it certainly fell woefully short of expectations in the prosaic surroundings of New York City. But, undaunted at her failure, Antonetta sought out a fortune-teller, who for a cash payment of five dollars raised the lovers' hopes by recommending a somewhat repellent concoction of herbs to which must be added four paws taken from a black cat. This was to be placed beneath the doorstep of her home, a doorstep over which Gregorio must pass many times a day. But the only sufferer from this new treatment would appear to have been the unfortunate animal who had had the bad luck to fall in Antonetta's way. It was only after the lamentable failure of these comparatively harmless methods that Vito, becoming impatient, decided on more stringent action.

And so enters into the drama the soothsayer of medieval Italy in the person of "Hoboken Kitty" an unspeakable female to whom a spot of murder

CORPUS DELICTI

was neither here nor there. If any person was to be removed then Kitty was the lady to come to for prompt attention to business and no questions asked. Kitty had her price, of course, and the payment for the removing of Gregorio was fixed at five hundred dollars. But poor Vito simply had not got the money and he protested loudly and long at this extortion. But, as "Hoboken Kitty" pointed out, five hundred dollars was a small sum to pay for the risk of sizzling in the hot seat up at Sing Sing. Besides, there were the actual assassins to pay, for Kitty was not disposed to perform her dirty work with her own fair hands. And well, really, if Vito couldn't get together the money then Kitty regretted that he would have to take his business elsewhere. But at last a contract was drawn up agreeing that Kitty should be paid out of the insurance money that would fall to Antonetta when Gregorio should be no more. Kitty and the two slayers would then present their accounts and everybody would be satisfied.

And now, to slow music, the stage is set for the entrance of Lorenzo and Mario—in other words Bill MacNamara and a thug known as "Dutch." The murder itself was a simple matter. Gregorio was enticed to a lonely road and despatched by dagger thrusts and blackjack. A most carefully arranged plan by which the crime could not possibly be brought home to Antonetta melted away before the questioning of the police as would have melted

DISPOSAL BY BURIAL

poor Gregorio's waxen image before a furnace. "Hoboken Kitty" was grilled for hours and at last told her story. After that, but why enlarge on the inevitable denouement? Antonetta, Kitty and Raimondo went off for twenty years seclusion behind bars; Bill MacNamara side-stepped the electric chair by the skin of his teeth and escaped with a lifer. The only one who could afford to laugh is the mysterious "Dutch" who, by the way, has never yet put in a claim for his money. No doubt "Dutch" has long ago written off the amount as a bad debt.

The case of Antonetta does not come under the heading of Disposal by Burial, but perhaps a little divergence may be allowed here. It is difficult, if one does not study the American newspapers, to appreciate the primitive outlook of Guiseppe and Joseph and Antonetta. But one has only to go back a few miles out of New York to come upon communities where superstition reigns and where witchcraft is by no means ruled out of everyday existence. To gather something of the mentality of Guiseppe Guilino one has not to look much further than Albert Yashinsky of Pennsylvania and the "Hex" killers. Albert, a taxi-driver, by this time has either been sent to the electric chair or to the Fairview Hospital for the Insane. The last reports were that he was sitting quite at ease in his cell in Schuylkill County Gaol reading his Bible and receiving visitors among whom was his sweetheart,

CORPUS DELICTI

the pretty nineteen-year-old Selina Bernstel who, by the way, was quite ready to accompany Albert to the altar. Albert's crime was the removing by means of direct action the "Hex" that had been placed on him by old Sus Mummey. And not alone Albert, but his friends, Drumheller and Stauffer, both miners in Pennsylvanian coal-fields, had long been under the spell of this pernicious old lady. Albert had put his case before a coloured doctor—whose ancestors no doubt practised voodoo in the hearts of African jungles—who had told him that there was no doubt that he and his friends were being "hexed" and that everything pointed to Mrs. Mummey being the cause of all the trouble. And had not the Bible taught Albert that there was no crime in ridding the community of such an one? Did it not say in Exodus xi. 18: "Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live"?

So Albert, we will hope reluctantly, albeit with a keen sense of duty, took down his gun, loaded it, and proceeded to the cottage where the old lady lived alone, and through the open window sighted a careful bead and sent two ounces of lead into Mrs. Mummey's heart. Then he returned home convinced that he had done his one good deed of the day, a conviction that was, needless to say, shared by Mr. Drumheller and Mr. Stauffer. Albert Yashinsky had, in his own opinion and in theirs, performed a public service.

But the Pennsylvanian police had other ideas

DISPOSAL BY BURIAL

on the matter and much to his chagrin Yashinski was arrested and charged with murder. *Murder*, when he had merely been carrying out Biblical orders and ridding the neighbourhood of a menace. Albert could no more understand why this should happen to him than Guiseppe could understand why he should be sent to Maryland Penitentiary or Bastien why he should be sent to Devil's Island.

Fantastic, you will say, unbelievable in this twentieth century. Atavism? Heredity? Perhaps, all unknown to himself, the blood of one of the old Pilgrim Fathers runs red in Albert's veins, maybe he and his friends are direct descendants of the emigrants of the *Mayflower*, those stern old Puritans to whom the devil was every bit as personal as their God. The records of the trials at Salem in the seventeenth century differ not so very greatly from the trial of Yashinsky in the twentieth. Listen to what his friend Drumheller says: "I was hexed for a whole summer and after a time found out Sus Mummey had put the spell on me. My head got all funny and I couldn't stay in the house. I had to run out in the bushes all the time. Then I heard about the pow-wow man over in Hazelton and I asked him who put the spell on me but he wouldn't say. That was the same man Albert went to and who told him it was old Sus Mummey." Stauffer is even more fantastic for he says that old Sus hexed him with a jar that had

CORPUS DELICTI

in it three newly-born pigs which she kept down in her cellar. Stauffer began to feel prickly all over he says, when he saw the pigs and went into a trance like Albert used to do. Then old Sus began coming to him at night. He'd wake up and find her leaning over his bed with the face of a black cat, and the cat would spit at him. Not so very far removed from the Salem trial where Baxter spoke of a parson "eighty years old who after being kept awake five days and nights confessed his dealings with the devil."

Meanwhile Albert's taxi is wanting a driver and Guiseppe is wondering what has happened to him in his Maryland cell. Both American citizens living under modern laws and conditions in a world of telephones and aeroplanes and radio, and deep in their hearts, ineradicably rooted, the sinister beliefs and traditions of the past. Age-old gods stirring uneasily in their sleep.

And yet I wonder whether we are not calling the kettle black considering that it was less than three hundred years ago that the unspeakable Matthew Hopkins travelled through the villages of this England of ours leaving behind him a trail of death and misery that could hardly have been equalled in sadistic brutality by Judge Jeffreys himself in the West Country. For at that time the belief in witchcraft was rife throughout the land, an old woman had but to have a bent back, a wizened face and toothless gums to be accused of being the

DISPOSAL BY BURIAL

cause of all the evils from which the neighbourhood might be suffering. Poor old Sus Mummey was merely born a few hundred years too late and no doubt in Hopkins's day the old dame would have been put to the tests with which the witch-finder smelt out his victims as the witch-doctors smell out theirs in the jungles of darkest Africa.

Not that the tests would have given Sus Mummey so peaceful an end as Yashinsky's bullet. For if she had been thrown into the village pond and had sunk, she would have suffered all the agonies of drowning, if she had floated she would have been burnt alive. If, on being pricked with a pin, old Sus had shown no signs of pain she would have been adjudged guilty. If she had screamed—well, no doubt the resourceful Matthew Hopkins would have found some other test by which he could satisfy his blood lust. When one considers that our own law courts tried some of these sorcery cases there is little cause to point the finger of scorn at the Salem trials and poor Albert Yashinsky. But it is pleasant to be able to record that Matthew fell a victim to his own tests, being half drowned and then completely hanged by an infuriated crowd of villagers in August 1647.

A man after Matthew Hopkins's own heart was Tomo the Baptist or the "Black Christ" of Rhodesia. Like Matthew in England, Tomo would tour the kraals and villages of Africa smelling out witches but adding a new angle to the old practice

CORPUS DELICTI

by using the recently introduced Christianity as a foil for his ghastly work. Perhaps, as with Yaskinsky, Tomo had been told of the words in Exodus and considered that he was doing a fine thing in smelling out witches and destroying them, but we have our doubts regarding Tomo. In company with a converted native chief named Sharwilla he would arrange huge baptism parties at night in the local river and at the end of these orgies most of the converts would be found drowned. It is supposed that both Tomo and the chief were actuated to a great extent in their choice of victims by the material circumstances of the accused. Sharwilla's enemies were baptised in large numbers and, Tomo's fame spreading, he was requested by other chiefs to perform a like service in their own territories. How many murders Tomo committed will never be known. He, like Matthew Hopkins, was duly hanged.

Dr. John Webster in his book *Witchcraft and the Supernatural* writes of a famous case that was tried before Mr. Justice Davenport and which shows that in the time of Matthew Hopkins the occult was widely believed in and acted upon even in cases where life and death hung in the balance. The worthy doctor says : " I confess the Walker case to be one of the most convincing stories, being of undoubted verity, that I ever read, heard or knew of and carries with it the most evident force to make the most incredulous spirit to be satisfied

DISPOSAL BY BURIAL

that there are really sometimes such things as apparitions."

Anne Walker, a young girl, lived under the care of her kinsman, John Walker, a widower, and when it became evident that Anne was about to bear a child, John, to hide her shame—and incidentally, it was suggested, his own—decided that the girl should be sent away till after her confinement. This being known to the neighbourhood nothing was thought to be amiss when John's friend, Mark Sharp, a miner, took Anne away to the temporary home that had been provided for her. Anne and her trouble were in fact forgotten when a certain miller, grinding corn in his mill some two miles from the Walker house, saw what he described as the ghost of Anne Walker, appear suddenly before him. The girl was deathly white and on her head and breasts were five deep wounds to which the apparition called the attention of the miller, Mr. James Graham. Graham was badly scared, as may well be believed, but he decided that it had been fancy and that he had better say nothing. Then the apparition appeared once more in the same spot and at the same hour, and the story it told was the same in every detail with that told on its first appearance.

The story which Graham told at the trial was as follows. The ghost of Anne Walker had said : "I was one night late sent away with one Mark Sharp who upon a moor slew me with a pick such

CORPUS DELICTI

as men dig coal with and gave me these five wounds and after buried my body in a coal pit hard by and hid the pick under a bush and his shoes and stockings being bloody he endeavoured to wash them but seeing the blood would not part he hid them there."

Graham by this time knew himself to be haunted—or "hexed" as Albert Yashinsky would have said—and decided to take his story to the police. The apparition had named the exact spot on the moor where the tragedy had been enacted and a search was at once instituted and the body of poor Anne found exactly as described. There were the five wounds, the coal pick, the bloody shoes and stockings. John Walker and Mark Sharp were at once arrested and put on trial at the Assizes. Naturally the story of the apparition was received with the proverbial grain of salt and it was broadly suggested that Graham was aware, of his own knowledge, of the tragedy on the moor. But the miller had no possible motive for murdering a girl he did not even know and he had no difficulty in clearing his name. John Walker and Mark Sharp were duly hanged by the neck till they were dead.

And that is an authentic case in this England of ours as Albert Yashinsky's is an authentic case on the other side of the Atlantic. But nearly three hundred years separate them.

CHAPTER II

DISPOSAL BY DISMEMBERMENT

ONE can hardly picture a worse fate for even the most callous of murderers than that they should be doomed throughout eternity to carry with them portions of their victims, seeking resting-places for their grim burden and finding none. One has but to imagine the scenes endured by those who have sought by dismemberment to secure safety from the rope to appreciate the stark horror of this particular form of disposal, the dream terrors that must follow in its wake.

A cellar in Hildrop Crescent and a little spectacled elderly man bending low over the remains of what had once been a woman. Carefully and with considerable medical skill Harley Crippen goes methodically about his gruesome task. All the misery, the utter hopelessness of his life with Cora Crippen has passed from him, his deed has been committed and there is a curious sense of peace of mind over him as he meticulously prepares his victim for burial. His agonies are yet to come. He must be very, very careful, for no vestige of his work must be left unhidden. The instruments he

CORPUS DELICTI

has used must be scrupulously cleansed and returned each to its place, any stains on floor or walls must be painstakingly removed. And yet Harley Crippen, like so many of his kind that have gone before, makes his great mistake and actually wraps up certain of his dreadful parcels in his own pyjama jackets, garments bearing the tab of a local hosier by which its purchaser can at once be traced. He fails also to obliterate an old scar resultant from an operation performed on his wife long ago and so, careful as he has been, Crippen leaves wide open two doors leading straight into the execution shed.

We see a room in Soho, and a slaughterman dismembering a lady who has become somewhat of a thorn in his side. It is a grey November dawn in the year 1917 and to add to the horror there is in progress an air raid over London. We see a bungalow on the Crumbles at Eastbourne, a locked room, a week-end in which love and death are curiously intermingled ; the shack of a Crowborough chicken farm where, by the dim ochre light of an oil lamp, Norman Thorne goes about his sinister work ; a sumptuous flat in Monte Carlo and two adventurers packing their ghastly baggage for a trip to Marseilles ; Gabrielle Bompard and Eyraud in the rue Tronson Ducoudray ; Greenacre riding in a crowded omnibus with the head of Hannah Brown in a parcel on his lap. Ruxton driving through the night in the car containing the ghastly burden designed for the Scottish ravine . . .

DISPOSAL BY DISMEMBERMENT

The distribution of the remains of a victim over a large area must necessarily increase the difficulties of identification and heighten the chances of a murderer's escape. But few succeed. Mahon, Crippen, Kate Webster : all trapped. But perhaps the most perfect example is the celebrated Voirbo murder in which Gustave Macé, the eminent French detective, won undying laurels. Voirbo was an efficient worker and in disposing of the remains of old Père Bodasse he went about his task methodically and with scrupulous attention to detail. Not for one moment did he lose his nerve. The head he filled with molten lead and sank deep in the waters of the Seine. Portions of the unfortunate old gentleman were cut up into minute pieces and strewn at night from the river-banks. The legs, which proved the ultimate means of his being arrested, he wrapped up in stiff cloth, securely sewn with stout string and deposited very inconsiderately in the well from which a certain restaurant in the rue Princesse drew the drinking water for its clientele. It was Monsieur Lampon, the proprietor of this ill-starred eating-house, who, having received complaints regarding the taste of the water served at his tables, determined on making a search of the well to discover the cause of the slightly acrid taste that was certainly apparent in the contents of the carafes he himself had tested.

It took but few moments for Monsieur Lampon to know that the complaints of his guests were fully

CORPUS DELICTI

justified and his own keenness of taste verified. Also it must have come to the unfortunate man that, except from the standpoint of a show-place for the morbid-minded, his restaurant was doomed. For by means of a hook attached to a long pole the restaurateur drew up a bundle, water-logged and malodorous, from which protruded a portion of what looked uncommonly like human flesh. Further experiments with the pole and hook brought to light another parcel, and when the police had been summoned and the stitches cut, two human legs in an advanced state of decomposition were disclosed to the horrified sight of Monsieur Lampon. Gustave Macé, the young and enthusiastic Commissary of Police, at once took charge and his investigations showed him that the stitches on the parcels had been made by someone who was accustomed to wielding a needle : stitches such as might have been made by a tailor. So, beginning at the rue Princesse house, Monsieur Macé started a hunt for likely tailors. The investigations, apart from this, proceeded on approved lines. While his agents were rounding up the tailors Macé devoted himself to the work of establishing the identity of the victim. Here, as in most dismemberment cases, he was faced with a huge task. There were at that particular time no less than eighty-four missing women in France and by a process of elimination and the exercise of an infinite patience, Macé accounted for them all, or rather proved to

DISPOSAL BY DISMEMBERMENT

his own satisfaction that the two legs in his possession were the property of none of them. And then it was Old Jules, the attendant at the Morgue, a grisly old fellow who had had in his time many thousands of corpses through his hands, who pointed out that, in his opinion, the legs were those of a man and not a woman. He was right, for what Old Jules did not know about corpses was hardly worth knowing. Monsieur Macé was faced with still another difficult line of investigation.

Before approaching the task of accounting for all the missing men in France one of Macé's agents came to him with encouraging news. There were, they had discovered, no tailors lodging in the rue Princesse house, but at one time there had dwelt in a room at the top of the stairs a pretty little blonde who had abandoned her occupation as seamstress for the brighter life of the cabarets and was now delighting her audiences nightly at a small music hall in the neighbourhood, Le Cochon Mort. And among the tailors who had from time to time brought the ex-seamstress work to finish had been a man named Voirbo. He had apparently become attracted to the little lady, for he had paid her such small courtesies as drawing water for her from the common well and carrying it up to her room on the third floor. Moreover, Monsieur Voirbo was a constant attendant at the music hall where the lady was now appearing.

Good, said Monsieur Macé, and got busy. He

CORPUS DELICTI

ascertained that Voirbo had until recently on many of his visits to the Cochon Mort been accompanied by an elderly gentleman named Bodasse but that lately he had frequented the resort alone, and enquiries among those who knew the old man elicited the fact that Bodasse had not been seen for some time in any of his other haunts. The only exception was the concierge of Bodasse's lodgings who swore that, although he had not actually seen his lodger, there had been a light each night in his room and he had heard him at his usual time pass his little hutch at the entrance on his way up to bed. He knew it was Bodasse, he said, because he had dragged his walking-stick as he went up the stairs.

Macé was not satisfied. Getting no reply to his knock, he burst in the door of Bodasse's lodging. The room was found to have been ransacked and dust lay thick on everything. Macé made a minute examination. On the table were signs that the candle had burnt in its own grease and on the mantelpiece there was a box containing one unused candle. The number of dead matches on the floor was found to be exactly one short of the original number of candles that the box would have held when full. Clearly someone had been in the room every night for eleven nights, which, curiously enough, was about the number of days since the last time Bodasse had been seen at Le Cochon Mort. Macé thought it now high time that Voirbo, if not

DISPOSAL BY DISMEMBERMENT

actually arrested, should at least be asked to account for his movements and to give an explanation regarding his old friend Bodasse.

But Voirbo was quite prepared for the summons that came to him from the Sûreté and ready with his story. They could not accuse him of any crime, he pointed out. But when, as they do in France, he was taken to a certain room where, in Macé's opinion, the crime had been committed, the accused sang a very different tune. Seeing that the detective had filled a jug with water and was about to pour it out on the tiled floor of the room, Voirbo registered terror, and confession followed in due course. For, noting the unevenness of the flooring, Macé had thought that if blood had been shed it would have taken some definite course and that water or any other fluid would show him exactly what that course had been. There were no signs of blood on the walls or on the floor, but that was not enough for the detective, who had observed signs that a general cleaning had been in progress. As he poured the water from the jug he watched it trickle slowly across the floor and form a pool where it sloped towards the bed, and here Macé gave instructions that the tiles should be levered up out of their settings. Beneath them, dried and yet quite unmistakable, were signs of what later analysis proved to be human blood. Little dried, black-red flakes that explained the disappearance of Père Bodasse and sealed the fate of Monsieur Voirbo.

CORPUS DELICTI

But that fate was not to be the knife-blade of the guillotine. The man's end was peculiarly French. Voirbo, among other activities, had once held a minor position in the Secret Service of the Government and, no doubt with the idea of sealing the lips of a man who knew too much, the authorities smuggled a razor into his cell and hoped for the best. And the curious thing is, that anyone who was coward enough to beat out the life of an old man with a tailoring iron should possess the pluck to use that razor-blade.

The assembling of the evidence in the Voirbo case is only equalled by the medical skill in assembling the portions of the body of Désiré Bodasse. Monsieur Macé of the Sûreté and Old Jules of the Morgue share the honours.

Of all the effigies in the Chamber of Horrors at Madame Tussaud's none surely bears so sinister an aspect as the lady named Catherine Lawler who there carved for herself a niche under the alias of Kate Webster. This young person, after a short but lurid period of crime and depravity in Liverpool, migrated to London where she resumed her chosen career and, crime not being found to pay as handsomely as she had been led to hope and finding the streets paved with anything but gold, went into domestic service. There can be little doubt that the decision to do so was arrived at more by reason of possible opportunities of larceny and perhaps blackmail that might accompany it than from

DISPOSAL BY DISMEMBERMENT

any desire to relieve the domestic servant problem.

The unfortunate woman who secured the services of this atrocious female was a certain Mrs. Thomas, a frail elderly widow possessed of a small income and a pleasant little house at Richmond in which, to supplement her slender means, she let one of her rooms furnished to single gentlemen. Kate's entry into the Richmond household inaugurated for poor Mrs. Thomas a veritable reign of terror, for from the moment that Kate set foot within the door of Vine Cottage she was hardly able to call her soul her own. Even the lodger refused to stay longer in a house with the loud-voiced Irish haridan, and it is this fact that no doubt presented Kate with the opportunity for which she had been waiting, that of finding herself alone with her employer. By a curious coincidence the lodger departed the very day upon which Mrs. Thomas, either from fear of being left alone with the Irish-woman or from motives of economy, had summoned up courage to give Kate Webster notice to leave her employ, a notification that Kate took extremely ill.

The woman acted with the cool deliberation of the born criminal. Mrs. Thomas was attacked, it is thought with an axe, and the body promptly dismembered and dispersed, a box containing the main portions of the poor lady's anatomy being dropped over the parapet of Richmond Bridge and

various other portions burnt in the copper fire or hidden in a kitchen garden in the neighbourhood. The head of the unfortunate Mrs. Thomas has not yet been found and, as the murder took place some sixty years ago, the chances of its reappearance are to say the least remote. The murder committed, Kate at once looked about her, seeking a means by which she could turn her fiendish crime into ready cash, before shaking the dust of Richmond from her feet and seeking pastures new. Posing as her own victim, Mrs. Thomas, she enlisted the assistance of others in disposing of the furniture of Vine Cottage to the best advantage. A public auction being in her opinion merely begging trouble, a local dealer agreed to buy for cash the contents of the cottage, lock, stock and barrel, and the effects were duly packed up and carried out to the purchaser's waiting van. It was then that a lady living in the next cottage parted the curtains of her sitting-room window and wondered, as next-door neighbours will wonder, where Mrs. Thomas was moving to. Wondered, too, why Mrs. Thomas, with whom she was on very friendly terms, had not thought to acquaint her of the fact and then, with a premonition of something dreadful, wondered what had happened to Mrs. Thomas herself. Moreover, the neighbour remembered that the day before she had been forced to close her windows at the back of the house on account of the dense and evil-smelling volumes of steam and smoke that came

DISPOSAL BY DISMEMBERMENT

from Mrs. Thomas's copper. All of which were vaguely disturbing to the good lady next door.

Neighbour-like, the lady walked down her garden path and enquired of Kate, who was standing at the gate superintending the removals, where her mistress was moving to, a question which was clearly resented by Miss Webster. Instead of answering civilly, Kate became abusive, told her luridly to mind her own business and hurried on the proceedings, and it was only after the vans had driven away that the neighbour recovered from her wonderment, or perhaps her fear of the virago, sufficiently to voice her suspicions that all was not right with Mrs. Thomas. The police were sent for and the discoveries in the kitchen of the cottage quickly changed suspicion into certainty.

The place was a shambles. Of Kate Webster there was no sign but the trail she had left behind her was so obvious that it took the law but a day or two to locate her in her native Ireland and bring her back to face her trial. The box containing the dismembered Mrs. Thomas was almost immediately washed up on the foreshore close to the bridge and duly picked up, and altogether the evidence, in spite of the head remaining hidden, was so conclusive that it seemed but a waste of public time and money to send the murderess for trial. But to the Old Bailey she went and had, moreover, the benefit of two distinguished counsel but, as can be readily seen, their task was altogether beyond

CORPUS DELICTI

their forensic skill. Miss Webster was sentenced to death, made a full confession, vainly attempted to postpone the evil day of execution by falsely stating that she was about to become a mother, and was duly hanged at Wandsworth Gaol.

Her efforts at disposal were utterly futile, and Mrs. Thomas from the moment of her death held Kate Webster in the hollow of her hand as firmly as Kate Webster had previously held her mistress. One wonders at the mentality of these killers who, after nerving themselves to their grim tasks, make such stupid mistakes as were made by Kate Webster and Henry Wainwright, for both of these idiots in carrying their dreadful parcels about the Metropolis drew attention to them by enlisting the services of others. Wainwright, as has been told, hired a boy to mind what was left of Harriet Lane and to help him place the parcels in his cab. Kate Webster enlisted the services of a boy named Porter to assist her in carrying the box to Richmond Bridge. Both of these boys helped their employers along the path to the gallows.

A case of dismemberment in which there is a certain similarity to both the Voirbo and Wainwright murders is told by Sir Cecil Walsh in one of his volumes dealing with Indian crime. A certain wealthy Indian gentleman, Kalyan Singh, having to leave home on a journey, requested his servant Bhagwati to make a point of sleeping in

DISPOSAL BY DISMEMBERMENT

the hallway of his house to act as a protection for the wife he was leaving behind him, Janki Kuer. Janki seems to have been somewhat of an advanced type of Indian womanhood and not too greatly hampered by the traditions of her caste and there can be little doubt but that during the absences of her lawful spouse Janki thought nothing of relieving the monotony of her lonely state by receiving visits from a gentleman named Bisham Singh, who would saddle his steed and, in approved romantic manner, ride over to his lady's bower from his home in a neighbouring village. It may be that Kalyan Singh had some suspicion as to the way his wife spent her time and this would perhaps explain his definite instructions to the servant Bhagwati.

But shortly after the departure of the master of the house Bhagwati mysteriously disappeared. The husband on his return found the house deserted save for a couple of servants, his wife having decided to go and stay with her mother. Kalyan Singh, lonely in his turn, followed her, and for the moment nothing was said about the disappearance of Bhagwati. But rumours began to circulate in the bazaars and at last Bhagwati's brother considered it his duty to make enquiries. His first interview was with Sundar, a fellow servant of Bhagwati's. Sundar's answers were far from satisfactory. He at first told the brother that Bhagwati had gone overseas to France to fight for the King Emperor in the Great War, but when it was pointed out that

CORPUS DELICTI

he had apparently departed on his heroic mission without beating of drums and without saying a word to anybody and that he had taken with him none of his possessions, Sundar considered it about time to change his story. Bhagwati, he then said, had allowed himself to be inveigled into a passionate intrigue with a woman and, despite the fact that he had two wives living at the time, had decided to go away with a new love. This Indian love lyric was believed no more than the fiction of the Great War.

It was then that the brother traced certain of Bhagwati's possessions to a loafer around the bazaars, an "untouchable" or low caste native named Jhoku, and thought it incumbent upon him to inform the police of his suspicions. Authority acted at once and Jhoku, detained and questioned, led the officials to a shed on the outskirts of the town where he said they would find what was left of the unfortunate Bhagwati. There was nobody to be found but there were certain olfactory evidences that, in a marked and extremely unpleasant manner, bore out Jhoku's story. Evidently the body had been accorded at least a temporary resting-place in the shed and, like Wainwright, the murderer had later decided upon removal.

Gradually the net tightened around the household of Kalyan Singh. Jhoku then told his story. He had been called to the house, he said, and had been taken to an upper room where the body of

DISPOSAL BY DISMEMBERMENT

Bhagwati was in the process of being dismembered under the personal supervision of the charming Janki Kuer. As an untouchable he had been commandeered to assist, as only one of his low caste could handle the removal of a corpse without fear of eternal punishment. He had taken the body to the shed and buried it. Then he had returned to the house and thoroughly washed and scrubbed the floor. [Here it may be mentioned that had the inspector of police possessed the detective sense of Monsieur Macé the tiles might have been dug out and traces of dried blood discovered as in the Voirbo case.] But this apparently was not thought of. And, then, said Jhoku, when everything was nice and clean Janki had packed up and gone to stay with mother. It was only on the arrival of the inspector of police that it had been decided to remove the body and seek a more secure disposal. This had been accomplished by burning, and Jhoku was quite willing to show the police the spot where the incineration had taken place. They found a few charred bones and remains of sacking but that was all, certainly not sufficient for identification.

It was a good story, as stories go, but the judge, when Janki came to trial, considered it not quite good enough and the accused lady was courteously given the benefit of the doubt. Kalyan Singh stood by his wife like the gentleman he was and Bisham Singh admitted to a mild flirtation with Janki, but that was all. How these three settled

CORPUS DELICTI

any little dispute that might arise out of the proceedings of the trial is nobody's business. Bhagwati has not yet been avenged. Nor, by the way, has he returned from the Great War.

II

One of the most curious cases of dismemberment occurred in Jasper County, Mississippi, quite recently. Here it was the dog of a rabbit hunter who gave the first notice of the atrocious crime for which two people were subsequently put on their trial. The dog's discovery of two mysterious-looking parcels deposited in the brushwood by the side of a country lane brought the police quickly to the spot and from investigations it was seen that a car had recently been driven on to the road verge and had become bogged deeply in the miry ground. Traces of the efforts that had been made to release the wheels from the bog were plainly to be seen and it was soon brought to light that a young woman driving a red sports car had been seen on the road and a garage proprietor came forward with the information that he had been called to the spot with his breakdown gear and that he had pulled out just such a car from the mire at that spot. Moreover, the garage man knew to whom the car belonged, a woman named Ouida Keeton who lived on the outskirts of the town with her mother, a woman of middle age who, it appeared,

DISPOSAL BY DISMEMBERMENT

when enquiries were instituted, had not been seen about the district for some days. Now Miss Ouida Keeton was a very popular girl in the community and the police officers hesitated before venturing to question her personally. But questioned she had to be and after telling a preposterous story about her mother being away on a visit to New Orleans to see her other daughter, a silly story which was disproved by telephone almost before it was told, Ouida gave an entirely new version of her mother's fate :

"Mother and I left the house early Monday morning," she said, "to get some cleaning fluid. We planned to scrub the floors in her room. North of Sandersville we stopped for an old lady who was walking along the highway. She wore a bonnet. We took her into the car. We had not gone far when I heard her say : ' You're the woman that has all the money, aren't you ? ' I looked away from the road for a moment. The old woman was pressing a gun against my mother's side. The woman looked at me, said : ' Turn up the next side road.' I was blindfolded. I heard two men talking. One of them said to me : ' We're kidnapping your mother. You can get her release by returning home and obtaining five thousand dollars in bonds as ransom. They told me where to hide it in the woods. I walked to the main highway, got a lift into town, and obtained the bonds, putting them in the designated spot. I received

CORPUS DELICTI

word that my mother would not be released immediately. They said they intended taking her to New Orleans and releasing her there after cashing the bonds. They disappeared with my mother, leaving my car stuck at the side of the road. I've heard nothing from them since. They threatened to kill my mother if I mentioned a word about what happened."

But by this time the police were beginning to lose any sympathy they might have felt for the girl, and as each part and portion of her story was given the direct lie they faced her with certain facts they had discovered. How, if the story of the kidnapping were true, was it that a parcel containing portions of her dead mother's legs had been found not many yards from the spot where her red sports car had become bogged? Why had the tiles in one of the bedrooms of her house been newly painted? How was it that she was possessed of a gun? Why had the floor of the room with the newly-painted tiles been so scrupulously scrubbed?

At last came an entirely new story. In this the girl implicated an elderly man in whose employment she had once been and whom she accused of having seduced her. This, as well as the murder, was stoutly denied by the gentleman in question, but there were many things that he found considerable difficulty in explaining. The girl, in accusing him, had told the police that the man had established an alibi, which she described

DISPOSAL BY DISMEMBERMENT

in detail, so as to save himself from accusation and on being questioned he gave precisely the answers that the girl had predicted, which was a curious coincidence anyway. This man, she said, had murdered her mother so that the family might enjoy greater freedom of action, and the hiding in the woods of the leg portions of the cadaver had been entrusted to her as her share of the task of disposal. She had tried to lift them on to the parapet of one of the bridges over the river, but had been unable to do so and so had deposited them in the brushwood only to find on returning from her grim errand that her car wheels had sunk into the soft ground, thereby establishing her presence at the spot and her apparent connection with the crime. There were undoubted signs that parts of the murdered woman's anatomy had been burnt in the grate at the girl's home, and the continual running of the bath water suggested another means by which evidence could have been destroyed. But the remaining portions of poor Mrs. Keeton were never found and although in this case fire, water, dismemberment and concealment were all employed, it was the latter that brought the crime to the notice of the police. There is no doubt that here was a case of a species of sex repression, for it was proved in evidence that Ouida had in her wardrobe a complete set of baby garments, also that she would at times suffer from fits of depression for weeks on end and would

CORPUS DELICTI

gaze at her own reflection in the mirror for hours together. It was proved, too, that although the girl was for ever receiving love-letters and huge boxes of expensive flowers and sweets, she herself had been the sender.

A singularly inept instance of dismemberment was that of the Soho butcher, Voisin. In the early hours of November in the year 1917 a sack containing portions of a woman's body was discovered behind the railings of one of the squares in the Euston Road district, and it was at first thought that perhaps this might be one of the victims of either the foreign Secret Service or of the air raid that had taken place on the previous night. The paper in which the remains had been wrapped bore a strange and ill-spelt reference to Belgium, and as London was at that time filled with refugees from that country it was suggested that behind the murder lay some political intrigue or war-time act of revenge. It will be remembered that in the murder of Beron in the East End, for which Steinie Morrison was arrested and convicted, a like suggestion of secret societies was put forward, the murder taking place so soon after the Sidney Street anarchist outrages. The marks on Beron's cheek were supposed to indicate the letter "S" and, as in the Voisin case, the cry of "Spy" was well to the fore.

But the murder for which Voisin went to the scaffold held no such Phillips Oppenheim back-

DISPOSAL BY DISMEMBERMENT

ground. That background was in fact rather ordinary and consisted of two women and one man. Madame Gerrard, with whom Voisin had been living, had, on her return from a visit to her native country, found that her butcher lover had, during her absence, been consoling himself with another lady and, what was more to the point, that the new-comer seemed in a fair way of ousting her from the position she had hitherto held in Monsieur Voisin's heart. For some time an arrangement of sorts by which Voisin visited Madame Gerrard and at the same time permitted Madame Roche to share his own house went on as well as could be expected, but it was not long before Louis began to look upon Madame Gerrard as somewhat of an encumbrance, the more so as he happened to be in that lady's debt for a considerable sum of money for which she was demanding an immediate settlement. Under the circumstances the removal of Madame Gerrard from his immediate sphere of action seemed to be indicated and Voisin, having no more scruples about killing a woman than he had about killing a calf in the course of his business, went about the affair in an efficient, and thorough manner and Madame Gerrard was duly butchered. And there efficiency seemed to fail Monsieur Voisin. Bloodstains in the lady's room in which, by the way, he very carelessly left an excellent photograph of himself framed on the mantelpiece, the concealment of

CORPUS DELICTI

Madame Gerrard's head and hands in a cask of sawdust in his own home, the wrapping of the remains in butcher's muslin, thereby proclaiming his trade—these were but a few of the incredibly stupid things by which the killer drew attention to himself. Despite the fact that there was a war on at the time the authorities spared time enough to send Monsieur Voisin to the execution shed.

The head of a victim has often proved a stumbling block to the disposer on account, of course, of its being the main factor in police investigation. Some years ago in Paris a certain charming Polish lady, Mademoiselle Jabourvuski, solved the knotty problem by preserving the heads of her young men victims in acid and retaining them as mementoes of their acquaintance. For the rest, the lady borrowed a page from the Burke and Hare book, disposing of the residue of her lovers to doctors and medical students for purposes of dissection.

Monsieur Macé, the hero of the Voirbo case, was also instrumental in solving the murder of a miserly old woman named Madame Gillet, and here again it was his masterly handling of the case that brought the murderers to the guillotine. In the year 1878 a Madame Devoeux who kept a boarding-house in the rue Poliveau in Paris received a visit from a young student who gave the name of Emile Gerrard and who told the woman that he wished to rent a comfortable room in her establishment. He was shown several apartments but seemed

DISPOSAL BY DISMEMBERMENT

somewhat difficult to suit till he was shown one in which was a roomy and empty cupboard with a stout lock. The room was not one that would recommend itself to a boarder who was seeking comfort, as it was dirty, dusty and had evidently been long in disuse. But it seemed to be just what Monsieur Gerrard required and the bargain was made. The student then left, returning the next day carrying beneath his arm a large parcel. He was not long in the room however for he left almost immediately, and to Madame Devoeux's annoyance, failed to return. The good lady had been complimenting herself on letting a room that she had looked upon as unlettable, and although Gerrard had paid a week's rent in advance Madame was disappointed. She found the door locked and, it being her practice never to display undue interest in her lodgers' affairs, she left things for a week before she had the lock taken from the door and entered the room.

She crossed immediately to the window and threw it open. A curious musty odour that had certainly not been present when she showed Monsieur Gerrard the room was in the air. But looking round the room Madame Devoeux saw that there was nothing to account for the offensive smell. It was not till she opened the big cupboard that she knew that she had discovered the source. For on the floor lay the mysterious bundle she had seen the student carry into the house, a bundle that bore

CORPUS DELICTI

on its outer wrappings curious stains, and from which the coverings had already begun to break away. Madame seems to have been a woman of strong nerves, for although she sensed the sinister character of the parcel she lost no time in dragging it out into the centre of the floor and cutting the string. The coverings fell away and Madame Devoeux gave a piercing scream as she found herself looking at a collection of what could be nothing else but human remains.

Other lodgers came running, and in a few minutes the police had taken charge of the horrible relics and had carried them to the Morgue where the gruesome exhibits were placed on public view for the purposes of identification. In those days the Morgue was one of the show places in Paris, with an entry on to the street through which anyone could pass. Even nursemaids have been known to take their charges of tender years past the steamy plate-glass windows behind which lay the corpses that had been taken from the Seine or been found murdered in street or cellar. But, beyond the fact that the remains from the cupboard in the Rue Poliveau were those of a woman and that at one time the left forearm had been badly burnt, there was no clue. It was only when Gustave Macé, with the thoroughness that had characterised his work on the Voirbo case, examined the lists of missing women that he discovered, by a process of elimination, that the relics in the Morgue might

DISPOSAL BY DISMEMBERMENT

possibly be those of a certain Madame Gillet who divided her time between running a small milk-stall and charing for the studios and offices in the neighbourhood, a strange occupational combination.

Enquiries into the activities of this old woman elicited the fact that she was a miser, and a search of her poverty-stricken room brought to light a fair amount in cash hidden in the mattress, and documents showing that certain bonds had lately changed hands, the signature on the transfer being that of a man named Lebiez. Monsieur Macé had little difficulty as a rule in tracing unnamed suspects but, given a name, the matter was simplicity itself and search was of short duration. Lebiez was quickly brought in and, through him, another man named Barre. And under the influence of the third degree their story was not long in coming. A terrible story it was. Barre and Lebiez had come to Paris from the provinces and had gained a precarious living in shady transactions around the Bourse and, in fact, by any means that came to hand, legal or illegal. It had been when old Madame Gillet applied to them for work in the cleaning of their office that they discovered the secret of her wealth. The rest was simple. The Gillet milk-stall was patronised and on one of her visits with the morning supply the two killers had made short work of the feeble old lady. A box had been prepared in readiness but it was found that it was not large enough for the reception

CORPUS DELICTI

of the body and dismemberment was decided upon. Portions of Madame Gillet were placed, as had been originally intended, in the box ; the remainder was taken in a parcel to the rue Poliveau where the cupboard had been waiting for its reception. The box was sent to the Gare d'Orleans, where it was duly recovered.

Both Barre and Lebiez went to the guillotine, and Barre's mistress, a pretty young girl named Leontine Lépine, was sent to prison for three years, it being understood that although it was proved that she had spent much time and labour removing blood-stains from the office she had had no knowledge of the actual murder.

A gentleman who took peculiar care in disposing of his wife piecemeal was Mr. William Sheward of Norwich, who spent three evenings cutting up the late Mrs. Sheward and took infinite pains in strewing the portions over so wide an area that it was not till thirteen days after the discovery of the first portion of *corpus delicti* that there was enough assembled to point to a murder having been committed. Even then identification was out of the question. True, there were certain police enquiries and among those questioned was Mr. Sheward, but his statement that his wife had gone away on a long journey seems to have been accepted without suspicion. A similar story was, it will be remembered, told regarding Mrs. Belle Crippen.

Sheward went on his way undisturbed. He

DISPOSAL BY DISMEMBERMENT

moved, certainly, from his house but only to King Street where he opened a pawnbroker's business. But the venture did not prosper and Sheward seems to have gone from bad to worse financially and morally. He had taken to live with him a woman who had borne him two or three children, and it seems strange that nobody seems to have enquired when he expected his wife back from that long journey she had taken. Also Sheward began to drink heavily and then there came the day when after a fit of deep depression he suddenly disappeared. A few days later a wearied, dishevelled man who had evidently been drinking walked into the Walworth Road police station and informed the desk sergeant that he had killed his wife. The sergeant, who was quite used to drunken men making these statements in order to get a night's lodging, told him to sleep his liquor off and talk to him in the morning. It was then that it became clear that the man was speaking the truth. His detailed description of the infinite pains he had taken to dispose of the remains makes terrible reading. He described his grim evening tasks, of how piece by piece he had taken the flesh out at night and scattered it in the outlying districts, even the woman's hair had been cut into a fine dust with scissors and had been scattered to the winds as he walked the streets of Norwich. The hangman at Norwich Castle ended a life that must have become unbearable for the murderer,

CORPUS DELICTI

although his method of disposal had given him no less than eighteen years of freedom.

Some years ago a certain Mrs. Cailey, a widow who was up in London from Lyme Regis in Dorsetshire, was walking along South Street, Battersea, when she saw in the ground-floor window of one of the houses a card stating that apartments were to be let. She knocked at the door and was received by Mrs. Christian, the proprietress, and after viewing the rooms Mrs. Cailey decided on taking up her temporary residence at the establishment. Between lodger and landlady there soon grew up an affectionate friendship although there were times when Mrs. Christian thought that Mrs. Cailey might be a little more prompt in payment for her board and lodging. But Mrs. Cailey over the tea-cups had opened her heart to Mrs. Christian. She was a wealthy widow, she said, of a Dorset man, and there were certain legal details with which her solicitors were grappling but which would soon be set right, and then she would come into a large fortune. In the meantime Mrs. Cailey confessed that she was just a little short of ready money. But she held out glowing promises that her good friend Mrs. Christian should share in her fortune when her legal affairs should be happily settled.

And then at last the postman brought to South Street the glad tidings that on that very morning Mrs. Cailey was to call on her solicitors and receive the first payment of eight hundred pounds, a fore-

DISPOSAL BY DISMEMBERMENT

taste of the vast sums to come to her in the near future. Mrs. Christian saw her lodger off and then waited with pleasurable excitement for her return. As the day passed Mrs. Christian began to wonder whether she had not been rather too trusting with the lady from Dorset. But the next morning Mrs. Cailey came back with a strange story of being attacked when she had left the solicitors' office and robbed of her money. But Mrs. Christian had no need to worry, she was going again to the office in Bedford Row that very morning and everything was going to be quite all right. So once again Mrs. Christian watched from her window as Mrs. Cailey, dressed in her best, sailed majestically down the pavement of South Street. And again she waited.

Mrs. Cailey, this time, did not return at all. But reading her newspaper Mrs. Christian saw with horror that certain portions of a woman's body had been found floating in the Thames and had been retrieved by a police boat from the mud flats near Southwark. Then followed during the next few days further grim finds as far apart in the river as Limehouse, Wandsworth, Hammersmith, Lambeth and Blackwall. Mrs. Christian's spirits fell to zero and at last she summoned up her courage to visit the mortuary where, after viewing the remains, she told the police that from the measurements of the assembled *corpus* she had no doubt that it was all that remained of her friend Mrs. Cailey. So poor Mrs. Christian wrote off the

CORPUS DELICTI

affair as a bad debt and once more the Apartments To Let card graced the window of the house in South Street. But that was by no means the end of the story, for some time later Mrs. Christian found herself face to face with Mrs. Cailey alive and well in the street. It is not recorded what passed between the two women or whether Mrs. Christian recovered any of the money owing to her, but as a result of the encounter the identification was duly erased and cancelled from the police records, and to this day the remains that had been distributed far and wide on the bosom of Father Thames have never been identified and the murder has long ago taken its place in the archives of undiscovered crimes. It will be remembered that the fiendish baby-farmer, Mrs. Dyer, used the Thames as a medium of disposing of her pathetic little bundles.

Another gentleman who took infinite pains to dispose of his victim by dismemberment was James Greenacre. Greenacre was to have been married to a Mrs. Hannah Brown when just before the ceremony that lady was found to be missing and as she had been last seen in Greenacre's company he was at once questioned by the police. And the authorities being no respecter of a person's privacy had the colossal impudence to force themselves into the room where Greenacre was in bed with a lady named Gale. And whether it was to save his skin, or as a graceful gesture of chivalry to his bed-fellow, Greenacre indignantly denied ever having

heard the name of Hannah Brown, mistake and Greenacre was there and In his confession that followed soon after his conviction he told a grisly tale of how he had cut off Hannah's legs to certain osier beds in Coldharbour Lane, Camberwell, and had taken the head in a parcel in an omnibus to the Regent's Canal where it was found wedged in one of the locks. His story was that the death of Hannah had been the outcome of an accident following a quarrel, but the story was told with little conviction and Greenacre entered the condemned cell after listening to what must surely be the longest death sentence oration ever delivered from the bench, an ordeal that must have made bitter indeed the prospect of death. In Greenacre's day the law seemed to delight in badgering the condemned criminal instead of, as now, getting the ghastly business of the black cap disposed of with the least possible delay. Not only had Greenacre to listen to the Recorder's long speech but he was forced also to listen to the condemned sermon preached at him by the "ordinary" in chapel prior to his execution. Meeting the cleric later in the corridor he upbraided him soundly for daring to refer to him in the sermon as the murderer. The woman Gale who, like Leontine Lépine, Barre's mistress, was proved to have cleaned up the bloodstains in the murder house, was given seven years and a shorter, but no less distressing, lecture from the bench.

CHAPTER III

DISPOSAL BY CONCEALMENT

CRIMES committed in lonely places or in the wild solitudes of the earth are easily hidden, at least temporarily, by the method of burial, but when the locality of the murder is some large city or populous district this means of disposal is by no means so simple a matter. It becomes, however, of prime importance for the murderer to hide without delay the body of his victim. Not only is the killer anxious to remove the grisly sight from his own eyes but the disposal of the evidence so vital to obtaining a conviction, the concealment of the *corpus delicti*, must be his first concern. Absence of the necessary tools, the unsuitability of the place or time, these and other things may rule out the burial method. No doubt Mr. Paiserbeck would have buried his Catherine deep in Colorado solitudes had he not been so desperately anxious to put as many miles between himself and the scene of the tragedy as possible. As it was, he very nearly won clear, for his arrest took place at the very moment that the train that was to carry him away to lose himself among the teeming thousands

DISPOSAL BY CONCEALMENT

of Denver steamed into the little wayside station of Glenwood Springs.

The story of the Paiserbecks, man and wife, is no new one. Two young people falling in love and marrying against their parents' wishes only to find that the struggle for an existence, supported entirely by their unaided efforts, has proved to be beyond their strength. Here are all the elements of the suicide pact but whether Paiserbeck could honestly plead that excuse is open to serious doubt. At the present time the man is serving a term of lifelong imprisonment in the penitentiary at Canon City for the murder of his wife, but there are many who still wonder whether Paiserbeck is not the victim of a miscarriage of justice so far as premeditated murder is concerned and whether the story he told at his trial was not, in the main, true.

The pair had been well brought up, expensively educated. They were cultured, refined, and the hardships that came to them in their married life must have told heavily on them. It may well be that love flew out of the window as poverty entered by the door or it may be that misfortune had so strengthened their love one for the other that even the thought of being parted in death may have been intolerable to them. We are not concerned with the guilt or otherwise of Augustus Paiserbeck, but with the means by which he sought to dispose of his wife's body, whether that body was the outcome of murder or self-destruction. But, whatever

the true version of the tragedy, there is but little doubt that the husband took infinite pains to prevent Catherine's remains from being discovered. Not only were he and his wife staying in lodgings in Glenwood under assumed names, but the scene of the tragedy had been so well chosen that it took twenty men the better part of two days, assisted as they were by Paiserbeck himself, to locate the spot.

But, when at last that spot was found, surely there was evidence enough to give a certain support to the husband's story. Two rubber bags which Paiserbeck swore they had used in an endeavour to asphyxiate themselves with ether, and empty cans that had apparently contained that drug, gave credence to the suicide motive he put forward at his trial. Moreover the youth exhibited a wound in his chest by which he sought to bolster up his story. The administration of the drug had been successful he said, in the case of Catherine, but he, being no doubt of a stronger physique and possessing greater powers of resistance, had quickly recovered from the temporary insensibility to find his wife lying dead by his side. In the anguish of the moment he had taken his jack-knife and made an attempt upon his own life but at the pain of the thrust he had lost courage and had decided to postpone the following of his wife into the unknown. A good story and one that, one would think, would have impressed a jury. The fact that the passports and marriage licence of the Paiserbecks

DISPOSAL BY CONCEALMENT

were found torn up in the vicinity certainly did not detract from the version advanced by the youth although these points were stressed against him.

There is a great deal to be said for the suicide story. It would surely be but natural that the couple, if they had intended to commit suicide together, should assume false names so that their parents might be spared the disgrace attendant on their act. Natural, too, that they should destroy their papers of identity and that they should seek a solitude of scrub oak and matted undergrowth where discovery of their bodies might be delayed perhaps for ever. Natural, too, that the boy, feeling the sharp bite of the knife-point in his living flesh, should lack the determination to drive the weapon home. There are not many with the courage of an Alma Rattenbury.

True, the manner of Paiserbeck's return to his lodgings and his subsequent secret departure from them points the finger of suspicion although that, too, in a way fits in with the story he told. So secret, in fact, was that departure that the landlady, evidently a woman who kept a sharp eye on her lodgers, had thought fit to inform the police. Paiserbeck, she said, had slipped out of the house in a surreptitious manner, and carrying a suit-case had run in the direction of the railway station. The fact that his wife had been with him when they went out that morning, and that he had returned to the house alone, was to the woman's

CORPUS DELICTI

mind suspicious and so it was that when later the train for Denver pulled in and Paiserbeck was about to enter it, two detectives suggested to him that it might be as well if he waited for the next train. Meanwhile, would he mind answering a few questions, the first of these questions being as to the whereabouts of his wife ?

Paiserbeck did what he could under the distressing circumstances in which he found himself. His wife was staying with friends up in the mountains, he told the police, and it was only when the detectives insisted that he point out the district of her sojourn that he agreed to accompany them. There was nothing further to be gained by concealment and the sooner his wife's body was found the sooner would it be able to give silent evidence to the suicide story that was either true or had been carefully prepared. As has been said, it took twenty men the better part of two days to locate Catherine Paiserbeck.

The story told by the accused was not accepted by the jury. Why, if Paiserbeck had intended to follow his wife, had he not sought other methods ? If he lacked the courage to stab himself to death there were other and less painful means by which he could have joined Catherine. But what if he had held no such ideas ? Might he not, had he once won clear, have changed his name and returned to single blessedness ? Be that as it may, had it not been for the intervention of the astute landlady,

DISPOSAL BY CONCEALMENT

it is very doubtful whether the body of Catherine Paiserbeck would ever have been found till, perhaps, a flock of crows might have been seen hovering over the vicinity where it lay or some rancher's dog pointed its master to the spot. There was a case quite recently where a school-master had been murdered and taken twenty miles away from the scene of the crime and hidden so effectively that it needed the grunting of a herd of wandering hogs rooting in the undergrowth to lead to the discovery of the body. The cases where buzzards and other birds of prey have led men to the gallows are too numerous to mention.

The problems that faced a certain youthful Sunday-school superintendent on the evenings of April the 3rd and 12th in the year 1895 were indeed pressing and calculated to tax the strength, the nerve and the endurance of far stronger men than the 5-ft. 5-in. Theodore Durrant. One wonders how it came about that the two girls who were the victims of the brutal attacks that were to rouse the whole of America to mob frenzy were induced to enter the Emmanuel Church in San Francisco after dark even under the escort of so trusted a friend as Theodore Durrant. For those were the days when young ladies were prone to swoon at the very mention of horrors, and the Emmanuel Church had had its full share of notoriety since its consecration five years previously. Many had been the unsavoury scandals attached

CORPUS DELICTI

to members of its congregation and even in that half-decade no less than two of its pastors had found themselves somewhat distressingly in the news. One of these had committed suicide and the other had been arraigned and had stood his trial for murder. It is only fair to the latter reverend gentleman to state that he had nothing whatever to do with the Durrant affair and, in his own case, was triumphantly acquitted. But the proceedings did nothing to lessen the sinister reputation that had gathered like a dark cloud about the Emmanuel. The double murder for which Theodore Durrant was sent to the gallows all but closed the doors of the sacred building for ever.

Quite an exemplary youth was this Theodore Durrant, secretary to the Christian Endeavour Society, a bugler in the signal corps of the National Guard and an industrious worker in church affairs. It was mainly through his activities in this latter direction that Theodore came into contact and formed friendships with Blanche Lamont and Minnie Williams. Popular and well-liked among the church set, it must be admitted that Theodore had little to recommend him on the score of personal appearance, and his success at parties and at picnics was no doubt due in part to his skill with the guitar and other stringed instruments, accomplishments which, in the prehistoric days before broadcasting had a distinct social value.

The disappearance of Blanche Lamont had in-

DISPOSAL BY CONCEALMENT

trigued San Francisco for some days. Detectives had been quietly at work checking up the girl's movements since the moment she had left her home on April the 3rd and advertisements inserted by her relatives had appeared in the personal columns of the Californian Press. The Pacific seaboard had long possessed an evil reputation as being associated with the vilest of all trades, that of the shipping of white women to the brothels of Honolulu, that melting-pot of vice where brown, black, yellow and white races mix, and it was in this direction that the police naturally turned in their endeavours to locate the missing girl. Criminal haunts were combed, every bye-way connected with the traffic explored, and then San Francisco was startled and horrified by the discovery of the murdered body, not of Blanche Lamont, but of her friend and fellow-worker Minnie Williams. The discovery switched the detectives off their underworld course and turned their attention to a narrower social circle.

Just within the front entrance of the Emmanuel Church leading in from Bartlett Street are situated the reading-room and library attached to the building. On the morning of April the 13th one of the church cleaners discovered on the floor of the library the crumpled figure of a young girl. She was lying in a pool of blood and her clothing was torn and disarranged. The woman, seeing there was no hope of the girl being alive, left the

CORPUS DELICTI

building and ran to the boarding-house where resided the pastor at that time attached to the church, the Reverend Dr. Gibson. The behaviour of this gentleman on learning the tragic news was, to say the least, strange. Whether he shunned the unwelcome publicity attached to his predecessors or whether the reason he gave was the true one, one cannot say. First he utterly refused to view the body of the dead girl till he had called upon one of the church trustees and asked him to accompany him to the church. Also, for some reason or other, he asked this trustee and the cleaner to say nothing to a soul concerning the grim discovery, wishing, as he said, to avoid publicity for his church. The presence of the trustee on the occasion when at last he was called in to view the body was necessary, the pastor asserted, for his soul's sake, as never in his life had he looked upon a woman with her clothing disarranged. This the doctor elaborated in the witness-box, stating over and over again that never had he looked upon the female form undraped, a fact of which he appeared to be inordinately proud. It was his strangeness of manner throughout the proceedings that the worthy pastor had to thank for drawing upon himself the very notoriety he had been so anxious to avoid. It did more than this, for Theodore's counsel did their utmost during the trial of their client to shift the guilt for the actual murders from their client's shoulders on to those

DISPOSAL BY CONCEALMENT

of the puritanical Dr. Gibson, a man, it is needless to say, of an unblemished reputation and against whom there was not the slightest trace of evidence.

In a crowded city such as San Francisco the disposal of a body presents many difficulties that are absent in a scattered community. Emmanuel Church is situated in a crowded district between Twenty-second and Twenty-third Streets and the church has no outlet but that giving on to a smaller thoroughfare, Bartlett Street, save for a small door leading out of the class-room. The murderer of Minnie Williams had little choice in the matter of concealment and here we are to assume, in the light of future events, he lacked the courage or perhaps the physical strength to repeat an act that must already have once before been performed by him. One can only surmise that the miscreant dared not carry his victim to the belfry, the sole secure, if temporary, hiding-place at his disposal. For he, of all people, must have known what he would see there, huddled up among the rafters. It was left to a policeman who was set on guard at the church after the finding of Minnie Williams's body to suspect that a like fate might possibly have overtaken Minnie's friend Blanche Lamont for whom he and his colleagues had been so diligently searching. To pass the time of his vigil in the lonely building this keen young officer decided to make certain investigations for himself. There were wooden stairs leading to the belfry and it was

CORPUS DELICTI

certain marks on the dust that had accumulated here that suggested that something had been dragged across the treads, a heavy sack or perhaps a body. As the officer, Riehl, proceeded, these signs became more and more evident, and on the topmost landing after a climb of three steep wooden stairways he came upon the body of the missing girl lying huddled shapelessly in the dust beneath the one bell the church possessed. Once, at least, must that bell have called, from the death loft, the faithful of Emmanuel Church to worship.

And now by a process of enquiry that need not be dealt with here the movements of the two girls were quickly determined. Street car conductors, janitors, neighbours came forward and gave their testimony and gradually the enquiries narrowed down till they rested upon Theodore Durrant who had undoubtedly been seen both with Blanche and Minnie shortly before their disappearances. There was, of course, conflicting testimony but the balance of the evidence was dead against the suspected man and young Durrant was arrested. Every moment of the youth's life for the past few weeks was probed to the utmost.

He told his story. He possessed keys, he said, to the Emmanuel Church and freely admitted being in the building on the evening of April the 3rd. Moreover, he admitted having seen and talked with Blanche on that evening, but swore that he had left her in the street and had proceeded to the

vv~
DISPOSAL BY CONCEALMENT

church where he had been asked to repair certain defects in the electrical wiring. But unfortunately for Theodore's story, the wiring showed no signs of having been touched and no one could be traced as having given orders that any such work should be done. Nor, it seems, could Theodore supply the name of that person. A staunch plank in the platform of the prosecution was the fact that Minnie Williams's purse was found in Theodore's pocket when he came to be searched, his explanation of this damning fact being the rather lame one that he had picked it up in the street. The net tightened. A lady who had been seated at her window on the opposite side of the street, on reading her newspaper, suddenly remembered that she had seen Blanche and Theodore enter the church together. Vainly the defence sought most unfairly to draw suspicion upon the unfortunate and eminently respectable Dr. Gibson, pointing out that the pastor's behaviour had been strange if not suspicious throughout, and that he was of a far more robust physique than young Durrant and certainly better able to perform the herculean task of carrying a dead weight of nearly nine stone up three flights of steep stairs in the dark, a line of argument that might apply equally to the late Mr. Sandow. The good doctor's puritanical outburst, moreover, might suggest repression. But not even the thousand and one meshes of the net of United States justice served to save Theodore Durrant from the rope. A last

CORPUS DELICTI

moment appeal to the Supreme Court at Washington met with no better fate and on January 7th, 1898, the Sunday-school superintendent and bugler paid the penalty of his atrocious crimes.

What happened on that evening when Minnie Williams was done to death? Did her murderer shrink from a second visit to the belfry where he felt that the dead eyes of Blanche Lamont would be watching him? Medical evidence placed the time of Blanche's death as having taken place at least ten days previously, so even the most hardened of killers might have been excused from facing such an ordeal. Concealment had served him for ten days, but at best it could have afforded but a temporary respite. Perhaps, had he had the nerve to give his second victim the grim companionship of his first, his secret would have been kept for weeks while the detectives searched the brothels of the Pacific for the missing girls. Here, too, we see that fatal one-way mind of the murderer. In committing his second crime Theodore Durrant must have known that he was deliberately pointing the finger to his first.

II

An interesting instance of disposal by concealment is the infamous murder of Jacob Denton, a wealthy mining magnate of Arizona. Denton vanished from all human ken in 1920 and the disappearance was utter and complete. Even when it was seen that

DISPOSAL BY CONGEALMENT

his mansion was still being kept open and run by his housekeeper and that the woman, a Mrs. Peete, was not unduly fretting at her employer's mysterious absence, nothing seems to have been done about it. Did not mining pioneers often disappear for whole months together prospecting in the mountains? Why should anything have happened to Jacob Denton? According to the woman's story Mr. Denton simply packed his bags and left them in the hallway while he went to fetch a cab. But he had never returned and the fact that just previously he had made his will seemed to suggest nothing sinister, except to the police, who now became insistent in their enquiries. Mrs. Peete certainly did not benefit by the will, but nevertheless the woman would seem, on her master's disappearance, to have taken a firm hold both on his financial and his household affairs. But it was made much of by the defence that the woman was not even mentioned in the last will and testament and certainly this may be regarded as a point in her favour. Jacob Denton, after making due provision for his daughter, left the residue of his estate to an orphans' home.

And so things rested till a little later it was decided by Denton's daughter to dispose of the mansion in which her father had lived, or to let it furnished. The latter was the course ultimately decided upon and it was the housekeeper's curious and quite gratuitous remark to the incoming tenant that set the machinery of the law in motion. This gentleman,

CORPUS DELICTI

a Mr. Millar, was advised not to make use of the basements but to keep the doors locked and if possible to cut off that part of the house altogether. One can hardly credit the crass stupidity of the woman who, whether she were guilty or not, must have known that she was treading upon dangerous ground.

Poor Jacob Denton's body was duly found covered with loose earth in that basement, the door of which was found to have not only been double locked but cemented up. Mrs. Peete on relinquishing her duties and leaving the house had apparently taken no great pains to hide herself and was willing enough when visited by the police to answer any questions they liked to put to her. She had a story all prepared. Mr. Denton had been "running around," as she expressed it, with a Spanish woman. Unfortunately Mrs. Peete did not know the woman's name nor could she furnish any other particulars concerning the lady that might assist the police in tracing her, but she was quite sure that, if Mr. Denton had been murdered, they had not far to look for the murderess. According to Mrs. Peete the fascinating, sinister, dark-eyed beauty from Spain had been capable of anything.

Questioned as to why she had warned Mr. Millar regarding the basement, Mrs. Peete informed the police that she was merely handing on a warning she herself had received and that she had considered it only fair that Mr. Millar should know what she had been told. From whom the original warning

DISPOSAL BY CONCEALMENT

had come Mrs. Peete does not seem to have stated—possibly it was from the lady from Spain. It was unfortunate for Mrs. Peete, too, that she should have been identified as a woman who had, shortly after Mr. Denton's departure to fetch a cab, pawned a valuable ring that had belonged to that gentleman and that she had cashed certain cheques purporting to have been signed and endorsed by Jacob but which had most certainly not been so signed and endorsed. Evidence, too, was forthcoming that loose earth had been carried into the basement by her express orders, cement purchased in her name and a shovel openly borrowed from an obliging neighbour. Items, perhaps, of ordinary household requirements but they hardly fit in with the claimed innocence of Mrs. Peete's warning against the basement. The nebulous figure of the fascinating señorita, kept alive as a good top-liner by enthusiastic newspaper reporters, became fainter and fainter still as the case proceeded, and ultimately vanished into thin air. Concealment had given the killer of Jacob Denton a bare two months' respite. The sentence on Mrs. Peete was imprisonment for life.

Concealment, indeed, seldom gives a long immunity from arrest. In the case of the two Chicago boys, one of whom, Richard Loeb, has lately himself been murdered by a fellow convict in Joliet Gaol, the attempt to conceal the body of Bobby Franks in a culvert failed in its object within a few

CORPUS DELICTI

hours. Curious how culverts attract the criminal desirous of concealing his victim. Chester Connor chose a drain in which to place the murdered body of his wife in Wyandotte. A gentleman, too, named Van Vlack, having killed his divorced wife, Mildred, in Tacoma, forced the woman's body into a culvert on the highway on the outskirts of the town. Needless to say the discoveries of these crimes took the police but a matter of hours. Concealment cannot be for long and culverts seem to be particularly inadequate as mediums. Mr. Robinson's trunk, like Vere Goold's, was opened within a few hours of its being left in the cloak-room at Charing Cross.

Culverts, too, were used by an atrocious murderer named Wilson on the borders of New Mexico. Wilson, a ne'er-do-well without funds but with a certain attraction, one may suppose, for the opposite sex, scraped acquaintance with a young widow with the clear intention of acquiring the fairly large sum of money the woman was in the habit of carrying about with her. This sum was the proceeds of the insurance policy on her late husband and although at first the company had agreed to pay her a monthly allowance the widow had later asked for a cash payment in full settlement. Whether this had been at the instigation of Wilson is not known, but it is very probable that the suggestion came from him, especially as we find him purchasing for cash a new car in which he and the widow set out on a

DISPOSAL BY CONCEALMENT

tour. The discovery of the woman's body on one of the lonely stretches of a New Mexican desert told its own story of murder but, owing to the absence of any clothing, identification of the victim was difficult. It was here that Wilson made use of culverts, not for the disposal of the widow's body but for the disposal of the clothes she had been wearing. Piece by piece the poor woman's garments were assembled but it was still a matter of great difficulty to read any message their silent testimony might give. For the garments were slashed and cut to pieces, collar and linings torn from the coat, skirt, stockings and corsets reduced to ribbons, even the lining ripped out from the woman's shoes. And here Wilson made the one mistake. His knife in cutting through the collar of the coat had slashed away the tab bearing the maker's name, or he thought it had done so. As a matter of fact, the tab was found hanging by a single thread and from this the identity of the victim was at last established. The case is of very recent date and it is as well for the sake of the poor woman's relatives that her name shall not be given, but it was ascertained that it was her habit to sew into her clothing the major portion of her fortune and there is little doubt that Wilson was perfectly aware of this. That maker's tab and the selling of the car brought Wilson to his well-deserved fate. Culverts had been as much use to him as they had been to Leopold and Loeb, Chester Connor and Van Vlack.

CORPUS DELICTI

Frederick Deeming brought concealment to a fine art. Like Joseph Smith he never varied his methods and so, when one day a Melbourne householder noticed that the boards of the flooring of his lower room were somewhat amateurly laid he proceeded forthwith to rectify the matter, a procedure that in due course brought Mr. Deeming to the gallows. Deeming, clever as he undoubtedly was during his long career of fraud, seems to have been, in common with all murderers, sadly lacking in the matter of small detail. When the Melbourne police found the body of a woman cemented beneath the floor-boards they called to mind that the house had recently been in the occupation of a Mr. and Mrs. Williams and, this knowledge being broadcast, it reached the ears of their comrades in Sydney, who then remembered that the remains of a Mrs. Williams had also in their own city been discovered in somewhat similar circumstances, a coincidence that definitely suggested police action. Enquiries sent to Scotland Yard then brought to light the fact that a Mr. and Mrs. Williams had recently resided in Rainham, near Liverpool, and that before his marriage Williams had rented a villa in which he had been visited by his sister and her four children who had mysteriously disappeared. The casual mention, too, that during his tenancy Mr. Williams had purchased considerable quantities of cement in order to make the flooring of the villa damp-proof was to say the least significant. Deeming in due

DISPOSAL BY CONCEALMENT

course reached the condemned cell, but he had been allowed a long run of freedom. The more surprising, considering that in three instances where he disposed of an inconvenient family not only did he employ the same methods of concealment, but he did not even trouble to vary the name of Williams.

Again we see the one-way mind of the murderer. In purchasing cement Mrs. Peete and Frederick Deeming were merely following in the steps of Mr. and Mrs. Manning. (Is it not somewhat strange that so many murderers should possess names containing the double letter? *Crippen*, *Deeming*, *Troppmann*, *Peete*, *Durrant*, *Neill Cream*, *Seddon*, *Muller*, *Thurtell*, *Chantrelle*, *Dumollard*, *Kiss*, to name a few at random.) Mrs. Manning was a Swiss girl who had been lady's maid in one of the Scottish aristocratic families and who, to her sorrow, married the son of a publican named Manning. Manning junior was a railway guard in the employ of the Great Western Railway and was for some time under suspicion of being concerned with the great bullion robbery of the "forties." This suspicion, whether it was justified or not, dogged the footsteps of the unfortunate man wherever he went and various ventures by which he and his wife attempted to make a living were doomed to failure from the start by reason of this handicap. The couple drifted from place to place and in the year 1849 we find them living in poverty in Bermondsey, where Manning's scanty earnings were

CORPUS DELICTI

apparently supplemented by the contributions provided by the amorous visits to Mrs. Manning of a wealthy gentleman named O'Connor, visits of which the husband was certainly well aware. So when O'Connor disappeared the police thought it advisable to call on the lady to make a few discreet enquiries. The discovery that the furniture at the Bermondsey house had been disposed of in bulk at a panic price to a Hebrew opportunist in the neighbourhood and that everything pointed to a hasty departure caused the police to institute a thorough search of the premises and it was the discovery of cement still moist surrounding one of the flagstones in the kitchen that led to the discovery of all that remained of the philandering Mr. O'Connor. If one were asked the three things that form the greatest allies to Scotland Yard one might mention cement, trunks and the indiscretion of the common or garden murderer. This indiscretion was well to the fore in the Manning affair. It was shown in the evidence that Mr. Manning had not only made many enquiries relating to the action of certain drugs on the human frame but had enquired as to the exact spot on a man's skull where a bullet would be most efficient. Moreover, he had openly bought the cement and a crowbar, and, in purchasing the latter, had volunteered the information to the salesman that he wanted one strong enough to raise large stones. He had also shown a remarkably keen interest in air guns and their efficiency. Mrs.

DISPOSAL BY CONCEALMENT

Manning was little better, for her flight to Edinburgh was fairly obvious and, on the woman being traced, it was easy for the police to discover that she had been visiting stockbrokers in the Scottish city in an endeavour to realise on certain bonds which were proved to be the property of the dead man. As in the case of the Dumollards each did their best when in the dock to place the rope round the neck of the other, but if ever there was a clear case of collusion it was that of the Mannings of Bermondsey. They ascended the scaffold together and were ushered into eternity in the presence of a huge concourse of people in front of the Horse-monger Lane Gaol. Concealment in their case gave them a respite of barely a week, from August 8th to 17th, to be exact.

The Blety Case in Hegersheim brought Herr Blety so close to the guillotine that he must almost have heard the hiss of the falling blade. The case became known as the Mystery of the Yellow Box and possessed many strange features. The box had been sent to Hegersheim left luggage office and, as is the way of these grim deposits, had made its presence so offensively felt that it had been opened by order of the stationmaster and the body of a middle-aged woman had been discovered. Now bodies do not get into locked trunks of their own accord : it would take a better man even than the late Houdini to do that. Initials on a bed sheet in which the remains were wrapped threw immediate

CORPUS DELICTI

suspicion on an innkeeper named Bletry, and it was proved by the evidence of certain witnesses that a strange woman had called at his tavern and had never been seen to leave again. This woman was supposed to be one, Adèle Brouart, a former housekeeper of Bletry's, and the remains were duly identified as those of this person. True, there were doubts, as Adèle Brouart had not been in the district for many years and only fleeting glimpses had been obtained of her as she had entered the inn. But the yellow box bore a remarkable similarity to one possessed by Bletry's new housekeeper, Franziska Lallemand, although this point was never thoroughly looked into. The whole case bristled with rumour and was apparently sadly bungled by all concerned, and although the evidence was dead against the accused man he was acquitted, the main happening that caused the prosecution to crumple up being the appearance of Madame Brouart herself alive and well. Reading of the report of her tragic death the woman had come forward complaining, like Mark Twain, that the report had been grossly exaggerated. A *corpus delicti* come to life !

Bletry was lucky. His story of a bleeding nose no more accounted for the profuse stains in his room than Ruxton's cut finger accounted for the stained carpets and clothes in his Lancaster house. Moreover, as in the cases of Jessie MacLahan in Glasgow and Voirbo in Paris, the floor was seen to have been meticulously scrubbed. The verdict of acquittal

DISPOSAL BY CONCEALMENT

was received none too well by Bletry's neighbours, who evidently had their own ideas as to his guilt, and from that time he was more or less ostracised in the village. Friends of other days refused to speak to him or sit in the same room with him. No one could be found to patronise his tavern or do business with him. In short, Herr Bletry was drummed out of the community and made his way abroad where he seems to have in no way bettered himself, dying within a short space of time in abject poverty. The railway station cloak-room was no kinder to him than it was to Mahon or Robinson or Vere Goold.

Some day there will be added to the list of the world's heroes a man who will dare enter a second-hand shop and ask to see a selection of trunks. Maybe dealers will in the not too distant future be forced to keep a "trunk book" as to-day the chemists keep their poison books, and cloak-room attendants may ask customers to fill up a form declaring the contents of deposits that they may deem to be suspicious. It is, of course, only natural that with no spade or open ground available the first thought of the killer should be to put out of sight the victim of his crime in the most efficient way possible. But if the trunk market is closed what is a poor murderer to do? One would have thought that Mahon with the whole foreshore of Sussex at his disposal need not have left blood-stained linen and knives in the cloak-room at

CORPUS DELICTI

Waterloo Station, but it can well be understood that Robinson with his one little room in Westminster or the Vere Goolds with their flat in Monte Carlo were more or less forced to the time-honoured method of the trunk or to the clumsy bundles of Voirbo and Wainwright. A desperate method, at that, for assistance had to be obtained, helpers hired to hoist the heavy article on to a cab, porters to wheel it from carriage to cloak-room—all potential witnesses in case of the plan going astray.

Bletry's must be one of the first of the trunk cases and it may be that to this gentleman belongs the doubtful honour of introducing the method. But the trunk crime *par excellence* is undoubtedly that of Gabrielle Bompard and Michel Eyraud. Gabrielle, a charming but utterly unscrupulous prostitute, was the darling of the boulevards and when at long last she was sentenced to twenty years penal servitude the crowds gave her an ovation that might well be envied by a modern day film star arriving in the French capital. The affair had all the ingredients for the concoction of a scandal such as the Parisian loves: a flashing dark eye on the boulevards that attracted Eyraud and forged the first link in the chain that was to lead him to the guillotine, a little street-walker and a bankrupt distiller, a love-nest in the rue Tronson Ducoudray and an elderly lover.

It was a worker on the roads who noticed, on the Lyons highway, a peculiar smell that caused him to make investigations. These investigations resulted

DISPOSAL BY CONCEALMENT

in the discovery of the remains of a human body hidden in the thick undergrowth of a small ravine. Nearby was discovered, a little later, a broken trunk and a tangle of cords and there were soon forthcoming certain indications that there might be a connection between these finds and the remains. Monsieur Goron, the head of the Sûreté, consulting the list of missing persons in Paris and the big cities of France, decided that the find on the Lyons Road fitted in very well with the disappearance three weeks previously, from his home in the rue Rougemont, of a sheriff's officer named Gouffé, an eminently respectable old gentleman whose only weakness was a taste for amorous diversion. Again referring to his lists, Monsieur Goron found that the disappearance of Gouffé again fitted in very well with another fact, the disappearance of a certain ex-convict named Michel Eyraud whose mistress, Mademoiselle Bompard, had vanished also. The officials of the Sûreté established contact with their confrères at Scotland Yard and as a result the French quarter of London was combed for information. It was not long before it was established that Eyraud and the pretty Gabrielle had resided for some days in Soho and that on July 14th, France's national holiday, the woman had left for Paris taking with her a trunk she had purchased in Oxford Street. Other purchases were also traced to the pretty Gabrielle, a dressing-gown with a strong silken girdle, a pulley block, some yards of

CORPUS DELICTI

strong rope and a swivel hook. Surely no murder has ever been more deliberately planned or more callously executed than was that of the rue Tronson Ducoudray. Girdle, rope, hook and trunk, all had their part in the tragedy of the amorous Gouffé. And after depositing their gruesome burden in the ravine on the Lyons Road the two shook the Parisian dust from their feet and departed for Canada, Gabrielle being disguised as a boy for the journey just as, a few years later, Crippen and Miss Le Neve were to join the *Montrose* for the same destination. Gabrielle and Eyraud won through and, once more resuming her natural sex, the little lady resumed with it her undoubted sway over masculine hearts. In other words she soon left Eyraud, of whom she was tiring, for a wealthy admirer named Garanger, in whose company she returned to Europe. Meanwhile Eyraud, hearing of the discovery of the body of Gouffé and of Monsieur Goron's interest in his unworthy self, wrote from America offering to return to Paris and explain everything. He had committed no murder, he wrote, but he knew who had done so and that was Gabrielle Bompard. He intimated that his conscience troubled him and that he wished to be as helpful as he could in clearing up the matter. Goron, instead of replying to the letter, despatched two of his best detectives to New York to bring Mr. Eyraud back to Paris thinking, no doubt, that one interview would be worth a thousand letters.

DISPOSAL BY CONCEALMENT

And then a strange thing happened, so strange that one wonders whether it could have happened in any country other than France.

Whether, like Bastien, the girl thought that she had her fingers crossed and that she was perfectly safe in denouncing her confederate one cannot say, but one fine morning the fair Gabrielle visited Monsieur Goron in company with her latest capture, Monsieur Garanger. It was quite a friendly and entirely unsolicited call. Perching herself on the corner of the officer's desk, where she was able to afford that gentleman a generous view of a neatly turned ankle, Gabrielle fixed her limpid blue eyes on Monsieur Goron and rattled off her story, her devoted slave Garanger beaming his approval. She, too, knew all about the murder of Monsieur Gouffé and, curiously, her story tallied in many ways with that told by Eyraud in his letter from New York, the only real difference being a change in the name of the murderer. As in the case of the Dumollards and the Mannings, each rounded on the other. And by some curious twist of reasoning, evidently shared by Monsieur Garanger, Gabrielle not only thought she had been, as it were, claiming sanctuary in coming to see Monsieur Goron, but it is almost suggested that she expected praise and, perhaps, a handsome reward for her expression of civic honesty. But Goron saw things rather differently. Much to Gabrielle's surprise and to the indignation of her new protector the little lady was

CORPUS DELICTI

there and then arrested and Monsieur Garanger, protesting loudly, had to leave the Sûreté alone. Later, Eyraud was traced to Havana where by a curious coincidence he ran foul of a man whom he had known in Paris, who communicated with the authorities. It was the end of the hunt and Goron's two detectives returned to Paris with their prisoner. Eyraud died execrated by all Paris on a guillotine erected before the door of Grand Rougette on February 3rd, 1891. Gabrielle, lauded to the skies and regarded as a long suffering girl who had been drawn into crime by a brute, received gifts of flowers and fruit in her cell and countless love-letters, and was for a short space the idol of all Paris. Then she, too, passed behind bars. She gained her freedom in twelve years and died in 1926. It is said that her attraction followed her even into the prison, that the coarse convict dress could not altogether disguise her femininity and that she won all hearts by her gentleness and charm. Even the prosecuting counsel had the kindest things to say of Gabrielle at her trial, training the whole battery of his accusation on to her male companion. Pointing dramatically to the slender little figure in the dock, dabbing at her big blue eyes with her dainty handkerchief, her little rounded shoulders shaking with her sobs, he said: "She is not a woman, nothing but a child, a motherless child, abandoned to her worst instincts without a strong hand to drag her away from the edge of the

DISPOSAL BY CONCEALMENT

abyss. . . .” A somewhat biased description, surely, of a woman who was one of the most callous murderers of her or any other day.

But at least Gabrielle and Eyraud were allowed a run for their money. It was nearly two years between the murder of Gouffé and the execution of Eyraud ; Vere Goold and his wife had barely two days at liberty before the law fastened upon them. The Vere Goolds were adventurers, he an Irishman of charming manners and excellent family and she a French dressmaker. Where the couple obtained the wherewithal on which to live life as they thought it should be lived one can only guess at, but various businesses were tried without success and we find Sir Vere and Lady Goold—he had adopted the title which it was supposed belonged rightly to a brother—living in a beautifully furnished flat in the Boulevard des Moulins in Monte Carlo and ruffling it with the best. Here, for a little while, fortune smiled radiantly upon them, the Casino tables were kind and money came easily and as easily went. But roulette and baccarat are not to be recommended as a permanent means of financial stability, and in time their run of luck took a turn against them and in a very little while the improvident Sir Vere and his lady found themselves in the deepest of deep water. In their extremity they applied for, and received, monetary loans from certain of their friends, among them being a Madame Levin, the widow of a wealthy

Swede and the possessor of a magnificent array of jewellery, which she was in the habit of wearing day and night. Madame Levin seems to have been kindness itself to the Goolds but even a wealthy Swedish widow expects repayment of her loans. This repayment, on the evening previous to her departure from Monte Carlo, Madame Levin attempted to bring about by a personal call, ostensibly to say good-bye, at the Boulevard des Moulins. She was leaving Monte Carlo the next day on the Blue Train, she told her friends, and would be glad to receive the small amounts she had from time to time advanced to them. Riviera friendships are merely ships that pass in the night and no doubt the lady thought repayment to be a case of now or never.

Poor Madame was as good as her word. She did indeed leave Monte Carlo immediately but it was not by the Blue Train. Madame left for Marseilles none too carefully packed into a trunk and hand-bag and accompanied by Sir Vere and Lady Goold. Their whole proceeding was futile and almost pitiful in its crass stupidity. Not only was the flat left with blood spattered carpets and curtains, but hotel porters and railway workers had handled the trunk both at Monte Carlo and Marseilles. Again an offensive odour prompted examination and it was seen that blood was even oozing from the trunk, so carelessly and hastily had the poor lady been packed. It seems that the trunk was not at once opened but the depositor was communicated with

DISPOSAL BY CONCEALMENT

at his hotel by the stationmaster, for Sir Vere seems to have taken no trouble to cover up his tracks. His explanation that the trunk contained poultry was received by the railway authorities politely, as is the way in France, but that was all, and the police were at once called in to take a hand in the matter. The Goolds were arrested when they were on the point of leaving their hotel and as Madame Levin's head was found to be in the handbag that Sir Vere was carrying there was little more to be said. Sir Vere, polished gentleman to the end, tried to take all the blame on himself but it was clear that the lady knew all there was to know about the crime. Her story was that Madame Levin had been followed to the flat by a discarded lover who had heard she was leaving the Riviera and that the man had killed her, her body being found by her husband and herself on their return from the Casino. Thinking quite logically that perhaps they might be suspected of being concerned in the crime they had decided to dismember the body and rid the flat of what might be regarded as evidence against them. As Sir Vere was not allowed to see or communicate with his wife after their arrest it would surely have been the long arm of coincidence stretched to its utmost if their versions of what had happened in the Boulevard des Moulins had tallied. Needless to say the accounts differed in nearly every detail, Sir Vere openly admitting that his had been the

CORPUS DELICTI

hand to strike the widow down, a deed he had been driven to by the desperate state of their finances and to his having absorbed a large quantity of brandy. Lady Goold, he admitted, had known what was in his mind but she had taken no part whatever in the murder itself. Sir Vere's loyalty was of no avail. The Court decided that, if one was to be blamed more than the other, that one was the woman, and Lady Goold was duly sentenced to death. But a merciful judge decided that the death sentence should not be carried out and Lady Goold was allowed to accompany her husband into exile at Cayenne. After a few years of captivity typhoid claimed the wife and shortly afterwards Sir Vere chose the simplest way out of his troubles by taking his own life.

It would almost seem that the more trouble a murderer takes in disposing of the body of his victim the easier it is to bring that crime home to him. The mere elaboration of detail is sufficient to link murderer and murdered in a chain of destiny. It is seemingly better to leave the body just where it is and take a chance. Consider the Jack the Ripper murders, where no attempt whatever was made to hide the bodies, and compare them with Wainwright's single crime and the wealth of detail and considered thought he gave to the disposal of Harriet Lane. Miss Huish, whose remains were found in a cellar of a house in Euston Square in 1879, is a case in point.

DISPOSAL BY CONCEALMENT

To this day no one has suffered for the crime although there can be no doubt whatever that Miss Huish was murdered. When found the remains had been covered with quicklime and there was still a fragment of frayed rope twisted about the woman's throat. But her disposal had been simplicity itself. The killer had merely dragged the unfortunate lady down the cellar steps and left her there, and it is a remarkable fact that although the remains were not discovered for two years or more no one seems to have suspected the grim secret although the house had been inhabited all the time. A servant girl, Hannah Dobbs, was charged with the crime. There was certainly evidence against her and after her acquittal there were long queues of sightseers to visit Madame Tussaud's, where Hannah's effigy was exhibited just *outside* the Chamber of Horrors. Arthur Lambton, late Secretary of the Crimes Club, tells of another case in which an acquitted man was placed in a like situation and who brought an action and succeeded in securing an injunction against the famous show in Baker Street. Mr. Lambton says he thinks the man was Monson of the Ardlamont case and states that his argument was that had he not been charged at Edinburgh in connection with the death of young Hamborough he would never have been considered of sufficient importance to be in the waxwork show at all.

Hannah had certainly been at Euston Square at the same time as Miss Huish, and she was picked

CORPUS DELICTI

out at an identification parade as having pawned a watch and chain belonging to the dead lady. Moreover a black cash box that was found beside the body was said to have been seen in the possession of Hannah Dobbs. But against that it was argued that the prosecution had failed definitely to establish the identity of the remains, and the defence threw doubt on the accused possessing the chemical knowledge necessary as to the action of quicklime.

It is a strange thought that here was a case where the murderer committed his deed in a house in London, merely dragged the victim to the cellar, threw a handful of lime over her and left it at that. There was no cementing up of the cellar as with Mrs. Peete, no carrying the remains from place to place in a trunk as with Vere Goold, no digging of graves as in the case of Euphemia Mozok ; and yet all three were brought to justice while the murderer of Miss Huish has gone free now for sixty years. The murder of Norah Upchurch, whose body was discovered in an empty shop in Shaftesbury Avenue in October 1931, is another case in point. After committing his crime the killer merely left the poor girl lying in the passage and, closing the door, was lost in the stream of London's traffic. That crime, has now been avenged, but had Norah's murderer tried to remove the body and hide it there is little doubt but that he would have been arrested and brought to justice long before, and another woman's life been saved.

About twelve years ago the body of a railway

DISPOSAL BY CONCEALMENT

switchman was found, shot with bullet wounds, in a cutting of the line, and although the victim, a man named Green, was a decent respectable member of the community and a man to be greatly missed, it did not appear that here was a crime other than one of ordinary brutality or perhaps robbery. Green was known to have saved money but it was not thought that he had carried much of this on his way to and from work. He was insured for a large amount for a man in his position and this money was in due course paid out by the insurance company to his wife. The widow and one son who was married and living at a distance comprised the dead man's entire family.

Although the shooting of Bob Green was not front-page news, the police spared no pains in bringing the old man's murderer or murderers to justice. There was one clue, the imprint in the soft ground of the cutting of a woman's shoe with a high heel, and near it a metal buckle. It was this that set Detective Pitcock thinking. There had been no attempt at concealment of the body ; that aspect of the case was to come later, much to the surprise of Pitcock himself.

More as a matter of form than otherwise the detective interviewed the son, LeRoy Green, and his wife Winona, an extremely beautiful girl of about twenty-four years of age. The distance they lived from the scene of the crime provided a perfect alibi, and the case would no doubt have

CORPUS DELICTI

passed into the files of undiscovered crimes had it not been for a small thing that struck Pitcock during one of his visits to Bob Green's house. The lovely Winona was then staying with her bereaved mother-in-law and it was the girl's somewhat strange manner during his visit that roused the detective's suspicions. Moreover, during the time he was in the house he had noticed a curious odour of something burning and, asking the source of the smell, was told by Winona that she had been burning odds and ends in the kitchen stove. Instead of, as many men would have done, rushing out into the kitchen and raking over the ashes, Pitcock showed no concern, but within a few minutes instructions were issued that all refuse from the Green house was to be placed in a particular spot on the town's rubbish heap and carefully sorted. It was then that the detective found among the embers and rubble the remains of a pair of high-heeled shoes but only one buckle, the fellow of the one that had been found by the dead body of Bob Green.

On his next visit to Green's house Pitcock found that Winona and her mother-in-law had left for a destination unknown and that even the girl's husband did not know where they were. The hue and cry was on. The police sought high and low for the missing women but when at last traces were found it was of one woman only, Winona, who had been to a bank and changed a cheque

DISPOSAL BY CONCEALMENT

of her mother-in-law's for a large amount. It was soon seen upon scrutiny that the signature was forged and now, with the bank clue to work on, the net tightened. Winona was arrested in company with her husband and taken to the station for enquiries. LeRoy loudly protested his innocence but it was soon seen that Winona was shielding herself under a mass of lying statements. One by one the lies were smashed : the alibi on the night of Green's murder was proved no alibi at all, the sale of the buckled shoes was traced to Winona, and she was faced with the forged cheque—a formidable array of evidence that even the resourceful Winona could not dispute. The confession came at last and even the case-hardened detectives were aghast at the enormity of the beautiful girl's crimes. It appears that Winona had lent her mother-in-law money on the understanding that this was to be repaid after Green's insurance money had been collected. But by the time the cheque from the insurance company had come in old Mrs. Green had discovered a secret that made anything in the nature of paying out good money out of the question. To Winona's repeated demands for payment the cunning old lady had merely smiled and reminded her daughter-in-law that there were such things as execution sheds.

And then had begun a reign of terror in which the two women dared not let one out of the sight of the other. And knowing what we do of Winona,

CORPUS DELICTI

it is hardly to be thought that she would put up with nonsense of this sort from anyone. So during a drive out into the country Winona calmly shot the old lady and concealed her body deep in the heart of a dense woodland where, had it not been for Winona's confession, the woman might have lain undiscovered for years. Then with the money from the forged cheque in her possession Winona had considered that her poor husband had been left quite long enough without her, and it was on her rejoining him that she was arrested. For Pitcock, having lost sight of Winona, had made it certain that he should not lose sight of LeRoy, and had felt sure they would sooner or later establish contact. Winona, now working out a life imprisonment on the Arkansas State Farm for Women, must often look down at the coarse, shapeless prison shoes and think of a pair of little buckled ones with high slender heels. . . .

A classic instance of disposal by concealment is the famous Arran murder in 1889. In this case it took a search-party of some two hundred men to locate on the wastes of Goatfell the body of a tourist, Mr. E. R. Rose, who was on holiday on the island. The place of concealment had been one of those dry walls composed of stones bound together with turf and earth in which fern, heather and bracken grow profusely. Had the body not been found when it was the sturdy growth might have, in time, made it safe for ever. Rose had

DISPOSAL BY CONCEALMENT

been seen ascending the mountain of Goatfell with one of his fellow boarders at the hotel, a man calling himself Annandale, and who posed as a man of means on holiday. It was proved later that Annandale was in reality a poor clerk named Lawrie earning at the most two pounds a week. He was seen the morning after the ascent with Rose on the pier at Brodick carrying two bags and waiting for the steamer *Ivanhoe* to take him back to Glasgow. The disappearance of Rose, a stranger in Scotland, caused, at first, little comment, and small search-parties that were sent out found nothing on the mountain to cause suspicion. In the holiday season in Arran people come and go and no particular notice is taken of them. But when Rose's relatives in Brixton began to make enquiries the search-parties were again sent out and large numbers of men from the surrounding hamlets took part in the search that led, fully three weeks after the murder, to the body of poor Rose built into the dry wall on a desolate part of the mountain-side. Then the hue and cry was out for Annandale and his identity with Lawrie established. Gradually the net tightened round the hunted man and at last Lawrie was rounded up and captured in a plantation near Hamilton where he had made a futile attempt to cut his own throat. From the first his guilt was apparent and, although he was convicted, he escaped the gallows and served twenty years in Peterhead Gaol.

CHAPTER IV

DISPOSAL BY WATER

FEW methods to the shedder of blood are more tempting than disposal by water and in most cases this is linked up with dismemberment. In the wide, swiftly running rivers of the western world, swirling their way, as so many of them do, through trackless forest lands and vast swamp areas there are a thousand and one chances against a body being recovered near enough to the scene of the crime to constitute any immediate danger to the murderer. The rapids and falls, too, the rocky bottoms and sun-bleached sandbanks have played many a part in making the identification of a victim well-nigh impossible and have, in many cases, entirely destroyed any evidence there might once have been to guide the investigators as to the cause of death. The dark alleyways, too, that lead down to the wharves and docks of rivers such as the Thames and the Seine afford many an opportunity to the murderer.

Perhaps the most dastardly outrage among the many kidnappings in America in which the agency of water was employed is the murder of young

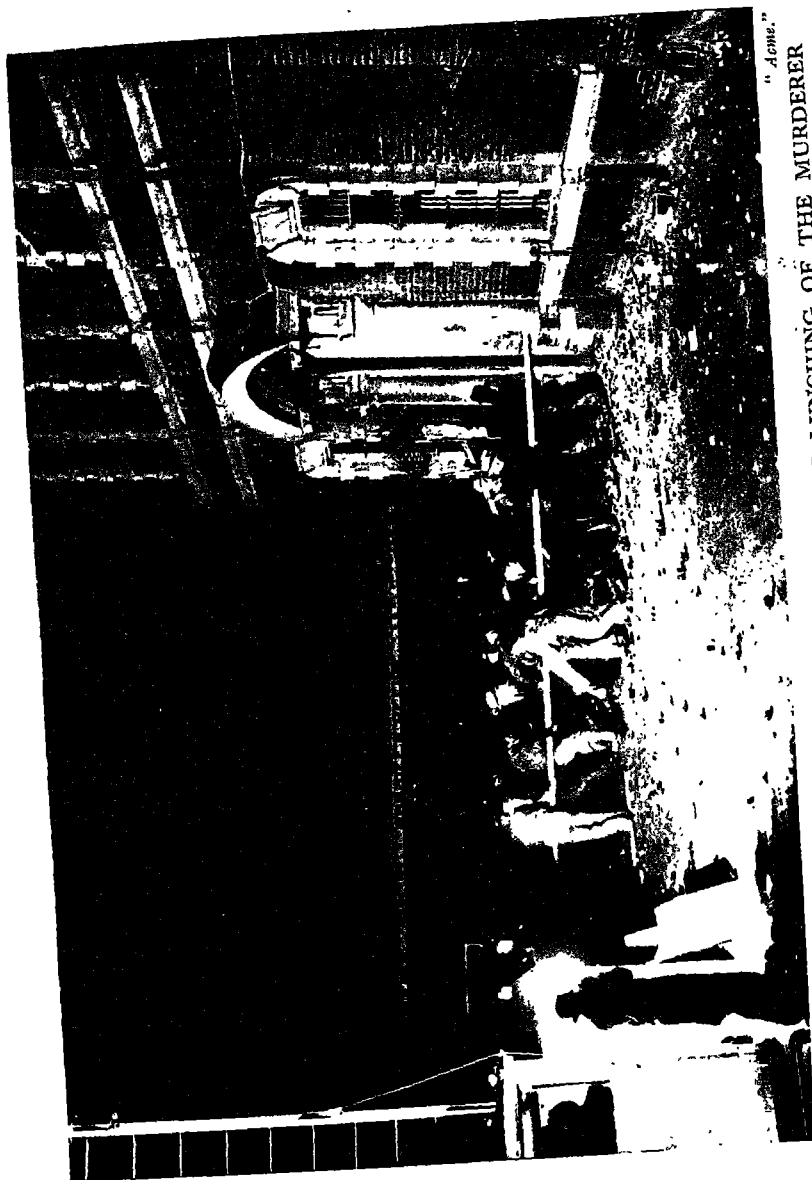
DISPOSAL BY WATER

Brooke Hart, son and heir of one of the most prosperous businesses in California. The "snatch" had been engineered with diabolical skill, the youth's car being forced, in broad daylight, to the edge of a country road and hemmed in by two other limousines in which were armed men who made short work of the transference of their victim to one of their own vehicles. They then sped off leaving the youth's car abandoned at the roadside. The anguished parents had not long to wait for news of their son. Telephone calls to the house gave them the minutest instructions as to the amount of the ransom and the manner in which it was to be paid, coupled with threats of the direst penalties to the boy should the police be communicated with in any way. But although the parents no doubt fully appreciated the danger attendant upon official interference the outrage had become so widely known throughout California that, with or without the family consent, the authorities were forced to act. Trap after cunning trap was laid by the police only to be deftly avoided until at last an arrest was made in a garage from which one of the kidnappers was in the act of telephoning to the Brooke Hart home. All calls in the district were being tapped and localised, a fact well enough known to the bandits but which hitherto they had been smart enough to counteract by means of outlying call stations and the use of fast cars waiting by the call-box with engines

CORPUS DELICTI

running. But the coup had come too late for anything but vengeance against the kidnappers which was later to be taken in full toll at the hands of an outraged public. Young Brooke Hart was already beyond human help. Like others of their kind his captors had become panic-stricken at the heat of the chase and had decided, as they felt the net closing in upon them, that the presence of their victim was but an added danger. With young Hart out of the way they would be enabled to move with greater freedom, and there was no need whatever for them to relax their demands on the family till the body of their son should be found. So long as the boy was thought to be alive there was a chance of payment. And in this direction the kidnappers had considered themselves safe. The confession grilled out of the two men who were responsible for the crime sent a wave of seething anger over the whole continent, a passion that wrought up to fever-heat, had its outlet in the lynching of both the accused men, Holmes and Thurmond.

Their confessions made terrible reading. After hours of questioning and hours of denial one of the men, maddened by hunger and want of sleep, broke and, faced with his companion's confession, the other could hold out no longer. But for this confession it is doubtful whether the body of young Brooke Hart would ever have been discovered. It was Thurmond who told the police that they



"Ame."

THE ATTACK UPON THE SAN JOSÉ GAOL AT THE LYNCHING OF THE MURDERER
OF BROOKE HART.

DISPOSAL BY WATER

would find the boy in the waters of the Bay, and went on to describe the dreadful scenes when Holmes and he threw the young man over the parapet of San Mateo Bridge. Brooke Hart had been taken to the bridge in a car and in the centre of the roadway had been stunned and his body attached to heavy concrete blocks by binding wire and then, as the boy was seen to be trying to free himself from his bonds when in the water, one of the thugs had climbed down one of the supports of the bridge and emptied his revolver into the body of the drowning man. They admitted that the presence of their victim had become a menace to their own safety, the fact that they still continued their attempts to extort the ransom is nothing new in American kidnapping, as witness the cases of the Lindbergh baby and that of the Californian "Fox," in both cases the victim being already dead before the ransom was paid over.

Brooke Hart's body was found within a few days by duck-hunters not far from the San Mateo Bridge. The sea had in very truth, given up its dead. Hideous as had been the fate meted out to the boy his end was almost merciful compared with that of his slayers. Their end came on Sunday, November 26th when many thousand men and women stormed the gaol of San Jose and surged through the building hurling aside gaolers and police and shouting for the kidnappers to be brought out. They were found, dragged from their cells and,

CORPUS DELICTI

screaming for mercy and fighting every inch of the way, were kicked and buffeted through the streets of the town to the place of execution, the city park, where many willing hands were waiting with ropes already slung across tree boughs to carry out the sentence of death delivered by the people themselves. Perhaps the inhabitants of San Jose remembered the strange and devious ways of American justice and were unwilling that the two wretches who were in their hands should escape through one of the meshes of the legal net. Let the lawyers and judges argue the case as long as they liked, but it was, they considered, just as well to make sure while the prisoners were within reach of the arm of their vengeance.

Water postponed the arrest of the Scottish murderer Hugh Macleod for some considerable time, but the killer had, in this case, the wild desolation of the Highlands to assist him. When at last the body of the unfortunate pedlar Murdo Grant was discovered in the waters of Loch Tor-na-heign it was at first thought that the man had either committed suicide or that his death had been the result of an accident. It was only later, when the pedlar's acquaintance with Hugh Macleod was established, together with the fact of the latter's free spending of money, that it was suggested to the Sheriff of Sutherland that there might possibly be a connection between the two men. In the Macleod case, as in those of Mortensen and Mark

DISPOSAL BY WATER

Sharp, the psychic played a curious part. A man named Kenneth Fraser, something of a character in the Highlands, being gifted with second sight, had come forward to tell in open court how, by reason of a dream, he had been able to lead the police to where a portion of the goods from the pedlar's pack had been hidden. It was known that Macleod and the pedlar had been seen together on a desolate part of the hills near Tor-na-heign and that since that time the pedlar had not again been seen. Macleod protested loudly that he was innocent but he broke at last when faced by his father and made a full confession. He had stunned the old pedlar with a heavy stone as they had been walking by the lakeside, thrown the body into the water and then rolled upon it a huge boulder but, finding that method not entirely satisfactory, he had waded into deeper water, carrying the body far out where he had hoped the tangled weeds at the lake bottom would better serve his purpose. It was only when the heat of summer dried up the fringe of the loch that the body of Murdo Grant was at last discovered.

Whether the story told so dramatically in Theodore Dreiser's *American Tragedy* was founded on fact, or whether the author's imagination has given the lead to imitative brains is immaterial, but the fact remains that, before long, any bereaved husband, or lover, rushing tearfully to the police with the tale that his wife, or fiancée, has been

CORPUS DELICTI

drowned while boating in one of the lakes that abound in the country to the north of New York will be as open to suspicion as anyone who enters a second-hand trunk shop in the Brixton Road and asks to be shown a nice roomy trunk. For there are certain young men who, finding themselves in the unenviable situation of Dreiser's hero, have taken a like method of extricating themselves from their difficulties. Two cases will suffice to demonstrate not only the one-way mindedness of the murderer already referred to, but the belief in the efficiency of water as an aid to murder. Although the murderer by this method cannot expect the body to remain undiscovered, he can at least hope that any signs denoting cause of death other than drowning may be eliminated before the water gives up its dead. Here are the stories of Lake Harvey and Lake Singletary.

When Freda Mackechnie's body was found drowned in Lake Harvey the police at once proceeded to question her fiancée, a youth named Robert Edwards. The boy answered coolly and without any sign of embarrassment and was apparently frankness itself. He had certainly been with Freda the night before but he had left her to go home and had himself returned to his own home and so to bed. He denied absolutely that he had been near Lake Harvey and it was only when he was faced with the fact that certain tyre marks on the soft earth at the lakeside corresponded, even



"Acme."

NEWELL SHERMAN, WIFE MURDERER, OF SINGLETARY LAKE.

DISPOSAL BY WATER

to their irregularities, with the tyres of his Chevrolet that he changed his tune. But Robert had another story quite ready to meet his changed situation. He and the girl had decided to go swimming in the lake, he now said, and had undressed in the car and spent some time in the water. Then suddenly Freda had fainted and Edwards had to admit that there was real cause why she should do so as within a few months Freda was expecting to become a mother. The boy admitted, too, that the girl had been pressing him to marry her before her parents discovered her condition.

Questioned concerning certain wounds on the girl's head Robert was perfectly frank. Seeing that the girl had passed from a faint into death, he had at once thought that he might possibly be mixed up in the matter and, with curious logic, had swum ashore, taken a blackjack from the car, where he said he kept it to ward off bandits on the road, and had struck Freda over the head as she lay half submerged at the lake's edge. He had thought by this that it would be understood that in getting in or out of the boat, the girl in fainting had struck her head on the rowlocks. The strangest thing about Robert Edwards's story was his idea that it would be believed. It was only when his father begged him to tell the truth that the real story came out.

It was the story of *An American Tragedy* all over again. The meeting with a girl in a higher

CORPUS DELICTI

walk of life than himself, his infatuation and the knowledge that the girl would, if he were free, marry him and raise him to her social level. But not only was Robert bound to Freda by ties of promise but by the fact that she was about to bear him a child. So, in Dreiser's story, had Sonja been the lure that had sent Roberta to her death at the hands of her seducer Clive Griffiths. Robert, when once he had made up his mind to tell the truth, kept nothing back. It was true that he and Freda had gone to the lake swimming but it was as they had entered the water that he had gone back to the car and fetched the blackjack. Then, when they were swimming side by side in deep water, he had struck and struck again till the dark waters of the lake hid from his sight the little figure in the orange bathing suit of the girl he had betrayed.

The second case is almost a replica of the first, only in this the murderer was married and the victim was his wife. Newell Sherman had been married to Alice for four years. He, too, went on the lake for pleasure but in his case, following Mr. Dreiser still more closely, a canoe had been hired. Shortly after they had left their home the husband returned, a pitiable figure with sodden clothes and frantic with distress. The canoe had overturned, he wailed, and his dear Alice had been drowned. If the police had not begun to get somewhat used to these accidents in which the man invariably

DISPOSAL BY WATER

saved himself and the woman was drowned, no doubt Sherman, a man very well liked in the community, would have got away with the story he told. As it was, the true version was grilled out of him after some two days and nights of fierce, relentless questioning. It reads as follows :

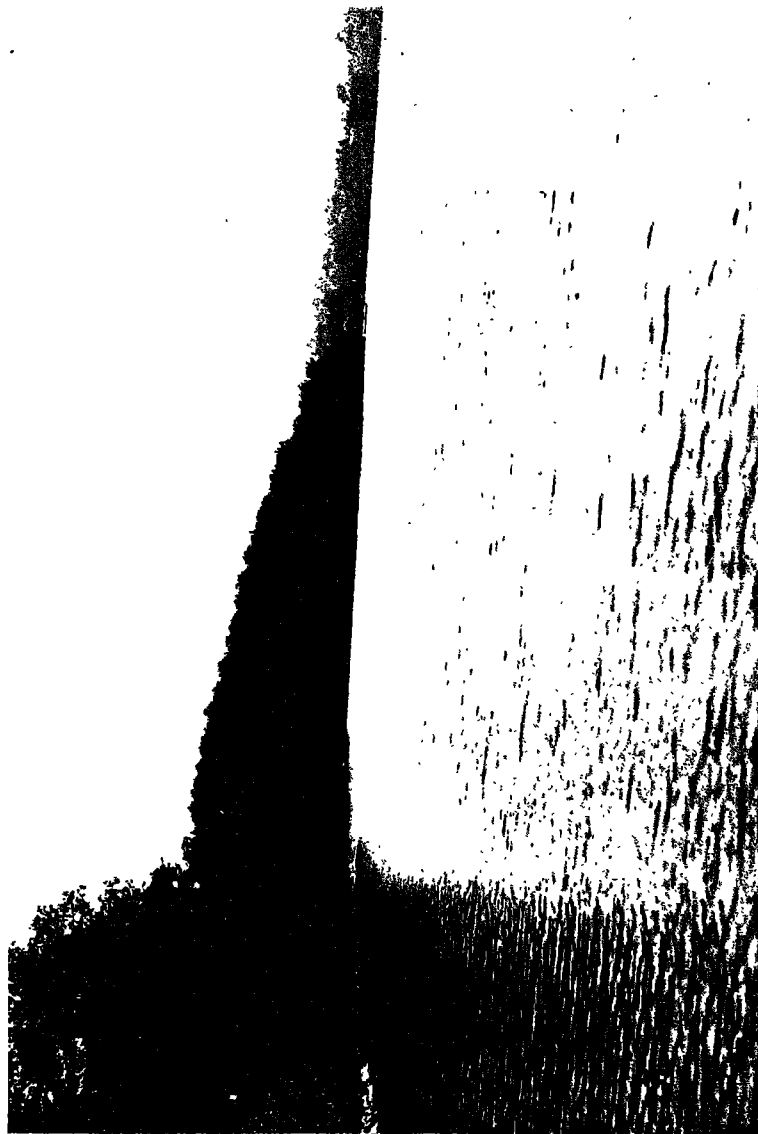
“ I went to choir rehearsal shortly after 7 p.m. on this date, and returned home about 9.15 p.m. At about 9.30 p.m. I took my wife from her home on Elm Street, Sutton. I took her to the boathouse and obtained the canoe that I had earlier in the evening hired. We paddled around Lake Singletary and stopped on the shore near Benjamin’s Wall. We parked on my father’s land for about three quarters of an hour. I paddled for about a hundred feet north from my father’s land and then turned west and went about two hundred to three hundred feet. At this point I deliberately tipped the canoe over with the intention of drowning my wife. After the canoe was tipped over, I then relented and thought of saving my wife, but lost my nerve and thought only of saving myself. I turned deliberately around in the water to get away from the hold that my wife had on the shoulder of my shirt. She sank immediately after I pushed her away. I remained there and saw the bubbles, and this was the last I saw of my wife’s body. I was trying to take my shoes off when I pushed her away, and after she sank one shoe was off and the other was partly on. I pulled the other one off. I went over to the canoe and got the front end of the canoe under my arm and swam in to the shore. I ran up through the woods as fast as I could to the Marions’ camp and tried to arouse them in the caretaker’s cottage. Then I went up to my

CORPUS DELICTI

brother-in-law's house—Perry's. This all happened between 10.30 and 10.40 p.m. My watch stopped at 10.40. My wife couldn't swim. My wife did not make any remarks when I pushed her away. The canoe was bottom side up, about eight or ten feet away, when I pushed her away from me. The reason for my act was my infatuation for Esther Magill of North Main Street, Whitinsville. I had been keeping company with her up until a couple of months previous to the Grange Music Festival at Sutton ; that was some time in May. The last time I had a date with her was on my birthday. That was April 26th. I had thought that if my plans to get rid of my wife were successful, I would propose marriage to the Magill girl. I never talked it over with her. I have read this statement and will say that it is a true statement made by me without any promise being made to me. I regret very much what I did, but don't know just how to express myself, and I was told that I didn't need to talk unless I wanted to."

"Death by drowning while bathing at Ireland's Eye," was the verdict on the body of Maria Kirwen who was found dead on the shore of a lonely island set in the Irish Sea about a mile from the tiny fishing village of Howth near Dublin. The story of the Kirwens is a sad one and, although there still seems to be in the minds of some criminologists an idea that the husband should have been given the benefit of the doubt, the life lived by the artist and his wife would seem almost to lead to the logical sequence of murder.

William Kirwen was over thirty years of age



"Acme."

SINGLETARY LAKE, THE SCENE OF THE SHERMAN CRIME.

DISPOSAL BY WATER

when he married his Maria, then a girl of sixteen, and the union was far from a happy one for from the first it would seem that the man practised deception on his young wife. Kirwen was an artist and there is no doubt that the Bohemian temperament was the reason for many of the quarrels that occurred between husband and wife. Mrs. Kirwen was a good little housekeeper but William had what one might call studio habits and the two mixed about as well as water mixes with oil. But all this the wife would no doubt have become accustomed to in time had it not been for far deeper troubles in the Kirwen *ménage*.

First there was the ever-present financial situation. Artists do not make much money as a rule but William Kirwen seems to have been an exception to that rule. But that happy state of affairs, unfortunately, did not affect Mrs. Kirwen, and when it is said that the artist's temperamental feelings had led him to the providing for another woman and a family of eight children it will be appreciated that however much money William Kirwen made it was not nearly enough. When this knowledge of the second home came to Mrs. Kirwen, who herself was childless, the friction in the Kirwen home was certainly not alleviated. But William seems to have been a persuasive type of scoundrel and, after all, a girl still in her teens with little or no knowledge of the world is no match for an experienced philanderer of thirty-three.

CORPUS DELICTI

A peace of sorts was patched up and a holiday suggested in order that the past might be forgotten and a fresh page turned in the Kirwen book.

The holiday at Howth seems to have been somewhat of a patchwork of quarrels and making-up. The artist set up his easel on the sands, Mrs. Kirwen bathed and loitered and the time went all too quickly. And on the last day before their return to their home in Upper Merrion Street in Dublin, William suggested that they should pass a long, long day together on the island of Ireland's Eye. It was a long day, indeed. For Maria Kirwen it stretched into eternity.

They engaged two boatmen to take them over to the island and, sending them back to the mainland, gave orders that they should return for them at eight o'clock. About seven o'clock the boatmen on shore heard sounds coming from the lonely isle that sounded like those of someone in distress. But they had their orders and those orders must be obeyed to the letter. Eight o'clock was their time and at eight o'clock the keel of their boat grated on the shingle of the island. They rested on their oars looking up at the grim forbidding outline of Ireland's Eye. It was a place that seemed for all its beauty to have been created for tragedy. Steep cliffs, rugged masses of rock and herbage, rose almost sheer from the sands, and against the night sky the boatmen could see the ruined fabric of the centuries-old church and the squat Martello tower

DISPOSAL BY WATER

that had been erected in the days when Napolcon was putting fear of invasion into Ireland.

The men gave a hail and their cry was answered by William Kirwen, who came from the shadows of the rocky caves alone. His wife, he informed the boatmen, had disappeared and he had been searching for her. She had wandered away while he had been painting and had told him that she was going to bathe. The boatmen landed and, spreading out, the three men began a systematic search of the coastline. It was Kirwen himself who discovered the body of his wife. The poor girl was lying in shallow water in a cleft in the rock. Here, white against the darkness, lay the dead body of Maria Kirwen. The girl was lying huddled on the bathing sheet she had carried with her when she left William painting on the shore and she had been dead for some little time, although her body was still warm. Together the men carried the pathetic form down to the water's edge and rowed back to the mainland.

There was an inquest and, as already stated, the verdict was accidental drowning. Maria was duly buried in Prospect Cemetery at Glasnevin and William returned to his deserted home in Upper Merrion Street and to the solace of his mistress and his eight children. Then the little fishing village of Howth began to talk. The fishermen spoke of the curious sounds they had heard coming from the island, the landlady with whom the Kirwens had

CORPUS DELICTI

stayed spoke of the frequent quarrels between the couple. The police listened, and then they applied to the Home Secretary for permission to have the body of Maria Kirwen exhumed. This was done and the verdict as to death being due to drowning alone was reversed. Kirwen was arrested and put on trial where he was defended by the celebrated barrister and member of parliament, Isaac Butt. The evidence against the accused was purely circumstantial and an acquittal was confidently looked to by the defence. There were no signs whatever of a sword-stick having been used, as was alleged, and the remains of poor Maria were so decomposed at the time of exhumation that there could be no direct evidence of wounding. But there were witnesses who spoke of the man's brutality to his wife and the fact of the eight children may have had its effect on a jury composed no doubt of decent-living citizens. Be that as it may, William Kirwen was found guilty and Mr. Justice Crampton in sentencing him to death expressed his approval of the verdict. He escaped the gallows, however, for life imprisonment.

Water provided barely a week's respite to Monsieur and Madame Fenayrou after the murder of the latter's lover in 1882. So short a time, indeed, that one might almost be tempted to describe it as hard luck considering the elaborate arrangements that the murderers had made to dispose of the victim of their atrocious crime. For

DISPOSAL BY WATER

Fenayrou had taken the precaution when staging the murder to provide himself not only with the methods of destruction, to wit a heavy hammer and a sword-stick, but had also taken good care to have the means of disposal ready at hand. The villa at Chatou which had been rented by the husband and wife for their fell purpose was a lonely one and was situated conveniently near the river, they had provided themselves with the means of transport by the purchase of a goat-chaise and to ensure the rapid and, it was hoped, permanent descent of the body into the dark waters of the Seine they had brought along to the house of death a length of lead gas piping which, beaten flat to make it more flexible, had been wound round and round the body of the unfortunate Monsieur Albert. The arrangements were, if anything, rather too perfect. The night was dark and the streets of Chatou deserted as the goat-chaise was wheeled towards the Chatou bridge, from the parapet of which the trussed-up body was lowered silently into the river. One can hardly blame the guilty couple for returning to Paris and to a gay little supper in Montmartre well satisfied with their night's work. But as bad luck would have it, a boatman on the river a week later happened to see a strange object half floating, half submerged in the water and investigations showed this object to be a certain Monsieur Louis Albert or what was left of that unfortunate gentleman. Bad luck, too, for the

CORPUS DELICTI

murderers that the famous Gustave Macé should be that time head of the Paris detective force, for that astute officer lost very little time in fastening the crime on to the Fenayrous. As I have said, the arrangements were a little too perfect.

It is not on record that either of the three prime movers in the drama were known to the police in the strictest sense of the meaning, but there can be little doubt but that the *ménage* in the rue de la Ferme des Mathurins had not passed entirely unnoticed. Marin Fenayrou had a bad reputation and his actions must have, at some time or other, been brought to the notice of the authorities, or at least, gossip must have reached official ears concerning him. Just as Gabrielle Fenayrou had married a shop assistant so, when Marin neglected her for other women, she again turned her thoughts in a like direction, her chosen lover being young Louis Albert, her husband's handsome young assistant in the rue de la Ferme des Mathurins. And this Louis Albert, albeit it is considered bad form to speak ill of the dead, seems to have been a most unspeakable species of snake, for not only did he steal his employer's wife but he openly boasted of his conquest in the hearing of the husband himself. And although it was rumoured that Marin cared very little what his Gabrielle did with her leisure moments it was not to be thought for one moment that Albert's boastings and lack of decency could go unpunished. But it was not till the young lover's

DISPOSAL BY WATER

roving eye strayed further afield that Gabrielle, the woman scorned, fell in with her husband's suggestion that together they should rid the earth of the fickle-hearted Louis and begin life afresh, free of his pernicious influence. Hence the villa at Chatou, the hammer, the sword-stick, the gas piping and the goat chaise—the links in Monsieur Macé's chain.

It had not proved a difficult matter for the fair Gabrielle to entice her errant lover to a meeting of reconciliation and kisses and together in the darkness they entered the love-nest where all was prepared for them, the principal preparation being the crouching of Marin Fenayrou behind the door of the room into which Gabrielle ushered her lover. But the darkness was not altogether in the favour of the attackers for Marin's first blow with the hammer fell short of its mark and, Albert being the younger man and physically stronger than the other, a rough and tumble took place in which there is no doubt Albert would have been the victor had the contest been left to the two men alone. But by this time Gabrielle had lighted a candle and, seeing the desperate plight of her husband, leapt into the fray and delivered a rear attack which changed the course of the contest and put the issue beyond further doubt. Held prisoner by the slender white arms that had so often embraced him, Albert was powerless and Marin's next attempt with the hammer left nothing to be desired in the matter of timing and delivery. Albert fell, whereupon Fenayrou proceeded some-

CORPUS DELICTI

what unnecessarily to pierce the dying man with the blade of the sword-stick while the lovely Gabrielle looked on, gloating over her fallen lover. Then when the streets of Chatou were deserted there was the procession to the river, a procession that was to be repeated within a very short time when Fenayrou, as is the manner in France, was forced to reconstruct the various episodes of his crime. Through the streets he once more wheeled his goat-chaise, but this time it was broad daylight and he was ably escorted by policemen, partly to watch the reaction of the proceedings on the accused man, and partly no doubt to protect him from the attentions of the crowd of worthy citizens of Chatou which followed the little procession, regarding the cowering Fenayrou much as a crowd of American citizens regard a negro seducer of a white woman. Both husband and wife were sent to spend the remainder of their worthless lives in the desolation of New Caledonia.

The story of the murder of three men, Strudevand and the two brothers Rutherford, reads like a thriller. For in it one finds racketeering, drug peddling, mail robbery, double-crossing and a seasoning of murder. In February 1933, the United States mail was robbed of something in the neighbourhood of sixty thousand dollars at Fort Worth, Texas. The case, while being handled in the ordinary way by the police, was also tackled by that astute body of men operating from Washington

DISPOSAL BY WATER

and known as the United States Post Office Inspection Service. It was two officers attached to this Federal body who were instrumental in solving the mystery of the robbery and incidentally that of a triple murder.

In choosing water as the means of disposal of the three bodies of the victims little reliance had been placed on the river itself holding the dead men. Large cages somewhat resembling fish baskets had been formed of wire and weighted with bags of concrete which, as is well known, hardens to the consistency of stone when immersed in water. Into one of the huge cages had been placed the bodies of the three men, stripped of their clothing which had been carefully gathered and sunk in another wire trap some distance away. It was the discovery of this latter receptacle and the state of the water-logged garments found in it that set the authorities dragging in Trinity river. A small boy playing on the brink had seen red on the surface of the water, and, far down among the reeds, the wire contraption, to which he had drawn the attention of his father. Thorough as the murderers had considered their arrangements to be, the water held their grim secret for just one day and no longer.

But it took four months to link up the murders with the mail robbery of February 21st. Suspicion fastened on a man of evil reputation named Stevens who had already served at least one term of imprisonment and who was known to be active

CORPUS DELICTI

in the liquor running and drug peddling activities. When at last his house came to be searched it proved to be a veritable honeycomb of sliding panels, faked staircases and underground passages and dungeons that would have turned the late Edgar Wallace green with envy. But although there was evidence enough to commend Stevens to the notice of the Narcotic Department, it was not quite sufficient to call in the services of the Homicide Squad. This was to be found in plenty when officers called at the home of Stevens's lieutenant and head gunman, Bill May. Here was found severed wire fencing on which the hacked ends fitted in to a nicety with the ends of the wire used for the construction of the baskets in Trinity River. Here, too, were signs of bloodstains for which Bill May could offer no plausible explanation. Here, too, were bags of concrete similar to those that had already been hardening in the water.

Stevens had organised the robbery of the mails and Bill May had ably assisted him. Rather than employ their own thugs, with whom they would have had to share the spoils, it had occurred to the astute Stevens that new recruits should be given the job and that men should be chosen who would be easily silenced if they should, as was distinctly probable, consider themselves to have been double-crossed. Into Bill May's net fell the two Rutherfords and Strudevànt, and under promise of a fair division of the plunder two of the men had carried

DISPOSAL BY WATER

out the work set them to do with commendable efficiency for which, no doubt, Stevens and Bill gave them full credit. But there it ended. Anything in the nature of a sharing out, a clause in the contract in which the three men were most interested, was shelved and put aside under various excuses until one of the Rutherfords, who had not taken any active part in the actual robbery, but who was as anxious as the others to claim his reward, became somewhat insistent. And insistence on a subject such as this was just what Stevens and Bill May would not stand for and immediate arrangements were made so that any further trouble from the three men should be eliminated.

Both Bill and Stevens were sent to prison for long terms, Bill for twenty-five years and Stevens for twenty-seven. This hair-splitting, to the casual observer, may seem rather in the nature of a grim jest. Stevens took his sentence with an ill grace, bemoaning the fact that he had been tried by a Federal and not a State Court. His political pull in the latter would, he said, have brought a parole and possibly a pardon. It is this fear of the Federal Government with its G-Men that will do more to check crime in America than anything else. A curious fact of the above case is that Bill May, tried also for murder by a States Court, received sentence of death in the chair, the mere sentence of twenty-five years for the mail robbery being a Federal matter. Whichever of the two takes precedence,

CORPUS DELICTI

it is clear that Bill May will do no more murder and if Stevens ever leaves his prison cell he will be far too advanced in years to hope to cope with the criminal methods, whatever they may be, of 1961.

Perhaps the most horrible of all the murders in which the dark waters of American Lakes have been used for the concealment of the victim is that of Ferrin Rowland, who murdered his two step-children, Virginia and Kathleen, by taking them out in a boat on Lake Beebe. This unspeakable brute deliberately planned the murders, hoping that the waters of the vast Michigan lake would hide the children's corpses for ever. It was in October, 1935, that the children disappeared. Rowland and the mother of the children lived on a small farm with the woman's elderly father, an invalid who had given his daughter a sum of money and the farm on the understanding that he should be kept and looked after till the day of his death. From evidence that came out when Rowland was on trial it is not stretching imagination unduly when one suspects that the day of the old man's death was not very far away and that before long he would have followed his little grandchildren into eternity.

The mother seems to have been a tool in her husband's hands and when questioned admitted that Rowland had been urging her to agree to getting rid of the children for years and rather than see him unhappy she had at last assented to the little ones being "adopted." Rowland had taken

DISPOSAL BY WATER

them away with him and the mother seems not to have dared question him as to what had become of them. The story they told, first to the neighbours and then to the police, was that the children had been adopted by a family living at Flint, but as no great care had been taken by the couple to see that their stories tallied it was not long before it was decided to arrest Rowland.

By that time, however, the man had taken to flight and the police had to be content with the woman, who was locked up and questioned. It was never entirely proved whether she knew exactly what had happened to the children, and it was not possible in law to convict her of participation in the murders, the only course being to commit her to an asylum for the insane. Rowland, when found, confessed and a dragging of the lake brought from the weedy bottom forty feet below the pathetic little victims of the crime. Rowland dodged the electric chair and possibly the lynching noose by hanging himself in his cell by means of a rope made from the ticking of his mattress.

It is likely that Rowland escaped more than the chair, for an American crowd of outraged citizens is a pretty tough proposition when their anger runs high. And the brutal killing of these two little innocents would have roused the Michigan populace as the murder of Geraldine Kollman roused the Texas community of which the schoolgirl had been a member. The two coloured youths, Mitchell and

CORPUS DELICTI

Collins, who were on their own confession guilty of her murder and of throwing the body into Cummings Creek, protected as they were by the authorities, never came to trial, their release coming in a somewhat violent manner. Nearly half a thousand men and women stormed the prison, overpowered the sheriff and his men, and hanged the youths to a tree in full sight of the home of their victim. There was logic in the course taken by the Texan citizens, for neither of the boys was over seventeen years of age and had they come to trial that trial must have been before a juvenile court, and the maximum sentence they would have received would have been confinement in a reformatory till they were twenty-one. The Texans were taking no chances.

II

Catherine Hayes found water an unstable medium by which to rid herself of the remains of her husband. Reading of that crime of 1726, one conjures up a romantically horrible picture of the London of the day. Imagine a night of winter and two men trudging through the silent streets and by-ways from where the Marble Arch now stands to the Thames at Horseferry Road. They are carrying between them a bucket in which lies the severed head of a man they had called friend, and who but a few hours previously had been their drinking partner in

DISPOSAL BY WATER

an orgy. It was a prearranged orgy, however, in which John Hayes had been induced to consume vast quantities of mixed liquors in order to sustain his boast that he could stand fifty times as much as an ordinary man. This alcoholic exploit had provided Catherine Hayes and her two lovers, Mr. Billings and Mr. Wood, with just the very chance they had been waiting for, the elimination of the fourth side of the quadrangle, not, fortunately as eternal as the triangle.

Assisting the inebriated gentleman to his bed they proceeded to render permanent his temporary unconsciousness by the medium of a large and heavy axe, whereupon the trio were faced with the question of getting rid of the body. John Hayes alive had been a genial sort of man, easily persuaded and who would do anything in reason for the sake of a drink, but John Hayes dead was altogether another proposition. John had been an encumbrance in life, in death he was the piper to call the tune.

The first thought was of decapitation. Strange how so many criminals think that by destroying the head all chance of identification will be removed. Voirbo, Greenacre, Kate Webster, Mahon, with all of them the first and foremost thought was the disposal of the head of the victim. There was a case in India where three natives poaching in Government woods shot accidentally or otherwise one of their number. Fearing to report the

CORPUS DELICTI

“accident,” as by doing so they would have to explain their presence in the forest, they thought to destroy all identity by cutting off the man’s head and burying the body under a thin layer of earth. They entirely overlooked the fact that the dead man had a deformed left hand by which anyone for miles around his native village could identify him. Their ruse failed dismally, one of the men being sentenced to death, the other to transportation for life.

But to return to Catherine Hayes. The head having been severed from the body, Catherine, who seems to have had the men entirely under her thumb, ordered that it should be carried from the house and disposed of as they thought best. Hence the long walk through the winter night to the river. Arriving at the Thames they found that the tide was going out but they took a chance. The idea of carrying their grim burden any farther was not to be thought of and bucket and head were thrown into the water. There it was that they were discovered the very next day by a waterman. And then began an ordeal for the head of poor John Hayes that surely has no parallel in criminal history. First it was taken to the police. It was promptly cleansed and set upon a spike close by Westminster Abbey, a sort of public morgue where-by passers-by could possibly assist the law, to await identification.

Meanwhile Billings and Wood carried on the

DISPOSAL BY WATER

grisly work for their taskmistress. Again water was brought into service and the legs and arms of the unfortunate John were deposited in one of the London ponds. It was not long before they, too, were found, and it was at once suspected that, if assembled, the various parts would constitute a complete man and, as the head on the spike had by now been identified, the authorities took it for granted that that complete man would prove to be John Hayes. Catherine was questioned. She told a tissue of falsehoods and was duly arrested, together with her devoted slaves, Billings and Wood.

But the hideous journey of John Hayes's head was not yet complete. After identification it had been put into alcohol, thereby carrying on the tradition which John had so ably supported during his lifetime. On her arrest Catherine, hoping to prove her innocence by an exhibition of sentiment, asked to see the head of her dear husband, a wish that was granted. We can only hope that, after this, poor John's head was at last accorded fairly decent burial. Catherine and her accomplices soon followed John into the unknown, the men by hanging and Catherine by burning at the stake.

Close by the Gulf of Mexico lies the country of the Bayou Teche, where miasmatic swamps, wide rivers, creeks and lakes are bordered by dense forests of cypress and oak. Here one would say a body could lie till it rotted or the carrion birds of

CORPUS DELICTI

the air destroyed it utterly. So thought Dr. Dreher and his mistress, Ada le Boeuf. It was a thought that brought them both to the rope.

Boys playing and hunting for frogs in the shallows of Lake Palourde saw, half floating in the dark water, an object that they discovered by switching on their torch to be the half-submerged body of a man, a hideous object attached to two railway sleeper irons, one of which had been fastened to the neck and one to the ankles. It took the coroner and his assistants more than an hour to get the body from the water without mangling it. It was then seen that the man had been shot by a sporting gun and that in the pit of the stomach an incision had been made with a knife. This latter was supposed to have been made to prevent the swollen cadaver from rising to the surface. Clearly a case of murder, and a verdict against some person or persons unknown was duly returned by the coroner's jury.

The body was buried unidentified, but efforts were not relaxed to trace the man. Enquiries showed that a certain Jim Le Boeuf, who was attached to one of the public services, had not been seen for a week and, naturally, his wife Ada was questioned as to his whereabouts. The woman informed the authorities that her husband had gone away on a business journey and that she expected him back in a few days. The old, old story told by Sheward and Crippen. So certain

DISPOSAL BY WATER

was Ada Le Boeuf that the body recovered from Palourde Lake was not that of her husband that she did not trouble to attend the identification efforts at the mortuary when asked to do so, but coolly ignored the whole unpleasant business.

A very smart piece of detective work resulted in establishing the fact that the murder had been pre-meditated. A party of holiday-makers remembered finding hidden in the fork of a tree by the lake shore *three* railway sleeper irons, and one of the party had idly thrown one of them into the water. The inference was that the three irons had been placed there in readiness for the murder and that as only two were found it had been impossible to attach the three weights to the body ; had this been done there is little doubt but that the victim of the murder would have been securely anchored down among the weeds at the bottom of Palourde. At last it was established that the dead man could be Jim Le Boeuf and nobody else. The next thing was to ascertain if Le Boeuf had any enemies in the community.

For some time previously there had been gossip concerning Ada Le Boeuf and a certain Dr. Dreher, a leading physician of the district. Now that the murder of Jim Le Boeuf had centred the spotlight of publicity on to the Le Boeuf home these rumours were again whispered from mouth to mouth. It then became known that although the Le Boeufs and the Drehers had been on friendly terms for a

CORPUS DELICTI

long time there had lately sprung up a coolness, and it was even said that Jim Le Boeuf had threatened to kill the doctor if he did not cease his attentions to his wife.

But the middle-aged Lothario was persistent. When love attacks a man as old as Dr. Dreher it attacks hard. Both these lovers were married and between them they had eight children. But the flame of passion still leapt high and the couple had lived in the heady atmosphere of clandestine meetings and secret correspondence.

And now comes into the picture one, Jim Beadle, between whom and the dead man there seems to have existed a feud. Beadle lived near the lake and it was when the sheriff was trying to find him that he stumbled on the information that Jim Le Boeuf and his wife Ada had been together on Palourde on the night when the murder was supposed to have been committed. Questioned as to this the woman told a strange story. She had been on the lake with her husband, certainly, but in separate boats, as was their custom. In the darkness they had seen another boat approaching in which were two men and from this boat one of the men had fired, killing her husband. She had not been able to recognise either of the men and had returned home resolved to say nothing as she feared that her name might be linked with that of the amorous Dr. Dreher and the latter accused of the murder. Ada Le Boeuf knew better than anyone

DISPOSAL BY WATER

the enmity that existed between the two men, her husband and the doctor.

The three principal actors in the tragedy were soon in the hands of the police, Dr. Dreher, Ada Le Boeuf and Jim Beadle. And then began one of the bitterest legal fights in which each tried through his, or her, lawyer to pin the crime on to the others. It may be that in certain instances there is an honour among thieves, but this, apparently, does not apply to murderers. Dr. Dreher, loyal lover as he was, tried his utmost to put the blame on to the woman, who, he said, had egged him on to kill her husband. Beadle swore it was the doctor who fired the shot, the doctor swore that it was Jim Beadle. Ada certainly tried to save her own skin and that of her worthless lover by turning her batteries on to Beadle, who curiously enough was the only one of the trio who came out alive from the court proceedings. He went to life imprisonment, and both Dr. Dreher and his mistress Ada, to the hangman.

In the summer of 1897, the body of a man was found in the Thames and murder was clearly indicated by the fact that the arms and legs were securely bound with rope. All the efforts of the police to identify the remains proved futile, and the man was buried in an unnamed grave. But the descriptions published in the newspapers caused a woman to come forward and assert that the man was her husband, her principal clue to his identity

CORPUS DELICTI

being the great height of the murdered man. An exhumation was ordered and the body definitely identified as that of Ludwig von Veltheim, who had, a short time previously, been acquitted of the shooting of Mr. Woolf Joel in his office in Johannesburg. Von Veltheim was, however, proved to be alive and well and, as a matter of fact, shortly after the Thames identification, he appeared before Mr. Justice Phillimore at the Old Bailey and received a long term of imprisonment for blackmail. Later he died abroad. Here, then, is a case where it would seem that water came to the aid of a murderer for the body in the unnamed grave still awaits identification.

Both the Thames and the Seine have borne their loads of tragedy down to the silence of the great waters, and many must be the sinister parcels that have escaped the eagle eye of the river police. Monsieur Claude, the famous Parisian detective, was some years ago much exercised by the finding, from time to time, of remains of mutilated bodies in the Seine, bodies that had evidently been cut up by someone with at least a slight knowledge of anatomy. His enquiries were to lead him to the solution of one of the strangest murder cases in France, at least, so far as motive is concerned. For the murders when traced to their source were clearly perpetrated for no other purpose than the purloining of loads of hay, surely the most cumbrous booty ever thought of by a murderer. Claude's

DISPOSAL BY WATER

enquiries led him to suspect certain small huts or cabins that stood on the banks of the Seine above the city, and he noticed that each of these huts was in the vicinity of a hayloft or stackyard. The identity of one of the victims was proved, although the head was not found. The malformation of one hand showed him to be a farmer, Duguet, who had, his son informed the detective, driven into the city with a load of hay and had never been seen again. What had happened to the old farmer was reconstructed by the coming forward of another farmer named Lacompte who had escaped by the skin of his teeth a like fate.

Lacompte, and presumably old Duguet, had driven hay into the market of La Chapelle, the road to which passed close to one of the suspected huts on the Seine banks. He had been stopped by a stranger who had passed the time of day, and in the course of conversation had remarked upon the supreme quality of the hay. Lacompte had been flattered and when the stranger had suggested buying the load and so saving the farmer the trouble of driving into La Chapelle, Lacompte had readily agreed and the load had been parked by the hut while the farmer accompanied the purchaser to his home in the Avenue Montaigne to receive the money. There he had been suddenly attacked by the supposed buyer of the hay who had dealt him a severe blow with a heavy hammer. But Lacompte was a sturdy fellow and he put up a good fight,

CORPUS DELICTI

escaping by a back door out into the street. Duguet, being an older man and less able to defend himself, had no doubt fallen into the same trap. And Lacomppte was only too willing to do all he could to assist the police, hoping by that way at least to receive compensation for his own hay.

The house in the Avenue Montaigne was searched and its owner, a butcher named Charles Avignon, and his wife were questioned. They were an old couple both nearly seventy years of age, and it was soon established that Charles had spent many years of his life in the convict settlement at Cayenne. Little by little the police built up the evidence and it was finally proved that the many bodies that had been cut up and placed in the Seine were those of Avignon's victims. The police then went to the Avenue Montaigne to make the arrest but the old convict eluded them and, descending by a trapdoor in his basement, entered one of the big pipe-lines that connect up the vast sewerage system of Paris. Here he was followed by the intrepid Claude and his men, and then took place one of the grimmest man-hunts in the history of crime. Through the noisome tunnels, slippery with filth and weedy growth and swarming with huge rats, the hunters and their quarry made their way, the only light being from the lanterns of the police. Above their heads the low-built arched roof dripping moisture, below them the swiftly running stream of sewer water and on either side the curving

DISPOSAL BY WATER

walls without hand or foot-hold save for the narrow ledge by which the official examiners of the system went about their tasks. But it was a hunt that could have but the one end and eventually Charles Avignon was captured and taken up into the light of day.

The man at his trial had something of the impudence of Monsieur Landru who was to come after, accused of other mass murders. Asked by the examining magistrate how he cut up the bodies of his victims the accused interrupted him with : " Pardon me, monsieur, do not say cut up, say dissected." But his impudence served him not at all and Avignon was sentenced to the guillotine. His last request was that he should be buried beside Lemaire, a particularly atrocious criminal who had just previously been convicted of the murder of his own father. Evidently Lemaire was something in the nature of a hero to Charles Avignon.

An attempt at disposal by water was the throwing into the Sandon Basin in Liverpool of the body of Nicholas Martin, a boy of some fourteen years of age, who had been enticed into one of the dockside offices and brutally murdered apparently for no cause whatever but the lust for shedding blood. The body had been packed into a carpet-bag and it was this that brought John Conway under suspicion, as there were boys who came forward after the bag had been taken from the Mersey who swore that they had seen Conway carrying it

CORPUS DELICTI

through the streets and that their attempts to earn an honest penny by offering to help him with it had brought a flood of abuse from Conway. A cabman also came forward and testified that he had driven the man and the bag to the head of St. George's Pier.

It was proved that Conway had access to the offices where the murder had taken place, the premises of the Seamen's and Firemen's Union of which Conway was a paid delegate. Conway in his defence tried to place the murderer as an unknown foreign seaman who had used the offices, and said that on his entering them later he had found the murdered boy. Thinking that, as he was known to the boy's father, he might be suspected, he had placed the boy's body in the bag and taken it to the dock. He had then returned and cleaned up the offices. But the evidence was too strong, and eventually Conway confessed but said the killing was due entirely to his being under the influence of drink and that he had been possessed at the time of what he termed a murder mania.

CHAPTER V

DISPOSAL BY FIRE

LOOKING back along the highway of crime one sees the skies reddened by many flares, fires kindled in the vain hope that the kindly flame would utterly destroy and consume the atrocities committed by the hand of man. The fire lighted by Arthur Rouse on the Northampton Road ; the sinister glow from the open furnace door in Boston where Webster sought to eliminate Professor Parkman ; the conflagrations of Karl Telzner in Germany and of Paul Snaith on the Iowa highway ; the smoke billowing from the window of that Margate hotel in which the arch-criminal Sydney Fox had already added matricide to the story of his crimes ; that nauseous, carmined cloud lying low on the horizon coming from the mushroom-growing furnace of the unspeakable Carrara ; the fires lighted by Landru in his little stove out at Gambais ; and the naked incinerated body of " Pretty Face " Amberg in Brooklyn.

The case of Snaith is not a murder case proper but it possesses many unusual features as well as many usual ones. Unlike Rouse's victim the man

CORPUS DELICTI

in the burning car in Iowa was proved to have been already dead when placed therein, for at the subsequent examination it was ascertained beyond the possibility of doubt that whoever was responsible for his presence in the vehicle must have robbed a churchyard or mortuary, or been acting in collusion with an undertaker or hospital employeé, or someone whose business was connected with corpses.

Paul Snaith was a fairly wealthy man who dealt in a large way in chemicals, many of which were of a highly inflammable nature, and the car in which he had been travelling at the time of the holocaust had been well and truly laden with the latter variety. The English and the American cases have many points in common. In both instances the burning car was discovered by two men who had seen the body burning within the charred mass of twisted coachwork and had been utterly unable to render assistance by reason of the heat and the choking smoke. In both cases insurance was a factor. In both cases too, women played a part. Moreover, there were but three months separating the crimes, that of Rouse being perpetrated on the night of November 5th, 1930, and that of Snaith on the third of the following February. It would almost seem that one had suggested the other, so identical in detail were the two crimes.

Rouse, it will be remembered, had taken out an insurance policy and had hoped that the incinerated



The Daily Mirror

THE BURNT-OUT CAR BELONGING TO ARTHUR ROUSE.

DISPOSAL BY FIRE

body of the unfortunate man whom he had picked up on the Great North Road would be accepted by the company's assessors without question as his own. And having provided, by reason of the insurance, for those he was leaving behind, he had evidently set his heart on making an entirely fresh start in life under another name and possibly in another country. A good and keen salesman in his own line of business, Rouse had very little doubt that he could readily secure employment, but his immediate surroundings, both of the pocket and of the heart, had become of late a very network of anxieties, from which the only escape was the cutting of the Gordian knot. For most of these anxieties were entanglements of the heart, and none knew better than Arthur Rouse the danger of a woman scorned. Whether he had intended taking into exile with him any one of his many mistresses is not known and Rouse was allowed little time in which to perfect any such arrangements had they been made. Although he had chosen locality and times very carefully he had not reckoned on any people being abroad on the lonely Northampton Road so late at night and here fate was against him and Rouse, having established his own escape from the flames by his meeting with these men, was driven into flight, hatless and with panic in his heart, to be arrested within a few hours in London. It was proved at the trial that he had picked up a wayfarer on the Great North Road, offered him a

CORPUS DELICTI

lift and then, knocking him unconscious, had poured petrol over the body and set fire to the car. This fits in, as will be seen, with the story Snaith had to tell the Iowa police and which he told as one repeats a well-learned lesson. One wonders, knowing that murderers are prone to overlook small details, what would have happened if, after drenching his victim, Rouse had discovered that he had not possessed a match with which to start his fire. He could hardly have waited for someone to pass from whom he could borrow one, neither could he have left a petrol-soaked man with a battered skull unattended, lying dead in his car by the roadside.

Snaith of Iowa had also taken out a policy, a short term one, that merely covered the period between its signing and the "accident" to the car. And, like Rouse, Snaith lost no time in stepping into the new life waiting for his coming, for within six weeks he was happily married to a charming girl of twenty years of age in Kansas. The fact that he had left a sorrowing wife behind him in Iowa was apparently a minor detail, for had he not made that lady's future amply secure through insurance? But there are two parties to an insurance contract and the company with which Snaith had taken out his risk happened to have in its employ a scrutineer who lived up to the title of his occupation. When to the ears of this astute gentleman came rumours as to the possibility of the body in the car not being

DISPOSAL BY FIRE

that of Paul Snaith he instituted certain enquiries, at first secretly and then more openly, with the result that legal machinery was set in motion and an order for exhumation issued so that the point of issue might be determined. And then suspicion became certainty. Dentists, doctors and personal friends all testified to the body being that of some man other than Paul Snaith. It is only a wonder that the fraud was not seen through at once. And in case there should be any lingering doubt on the matter, the coroner had with a certain grim humour added that Mr. Snaith most certainly had never been embalmed. And of this latter fact concerning the incinerated victim there could be no doubt. Traces of the aromatic and preservative substances and the tied ligatures used by undertakers, served to confirm the fact of substitution either by Mr. Snaith himself or by others. And then, with the hue and cry from one end of the country to the other, Mr. Snaith made a dramatic reappearance.

A farm labourer on his way to work one early morning found by the roadside a bound and gagged body of a man. On being released the man declared himself to be Paul Snaith, and then he told a most amazing story. It was a story that almost suggested that the Rouse case had been featured in the Iowa Press, for it, too, concerned a wayfarer who had asked him for a lift on the highway, but in this case it was the wayfarer, not the good Samaritan, who had wielded the spanner.

CORPUS DELICTI

Mr. Snaith had come to himself to find that he had fallen into the hands of kidnappers, but as there was never any question of a ransom being demanded for his return, and it was not likely that the kidnappers would keep Paul Snaith with them merely for the pleasure of his company, his story was not altogether believed. After three months, Paul said, he had been bound, taken from the cellar in which he had been imprisoned, bundled into a car and thrown out into the ditch. And that, said Paul, was all that he could remember. To which the police replied that it was plenty.

Plenty to show the authorities that they had a thorough-paced liar to deal with or a lunatic. Snaith's story hardly fitted in with his marriage to the Kansas lady nor with his robust looks and general air of physical fitness. Men who have been kept in confinement for months and not allowed out in the open air are apt to develop a pallor and show other definite signs of incarceration, but Mr. Snaith's little adventure seemed rather to have done him good. The story was examined from all angles. Mr. Snaith was grilled, but there was but one reply to be obtained from that gentleman—"I don't remember"—and so the alienists got to work on Mr. Snaith with the result that no charge was preferred against him, for one cannot charge a madman with insurance frauds any more than one can charge a man with the murder of an already defunct man. There was

DISPOSAL BY FIRE

simply nothing to be done except to send Mr. Snaith to an asylum.

Like his fellow victim in England, the Iowa body was buried in a pauper's grave and was soon forgotten. Strange, is it not, that a man can be suddenly spirited away from a community and never be missed. Surely, among America's teeming millions, someone must have had some knowledge of the victim of the Iowa tragedy, for even an outcast makes some sort of contact, good or evil, in his journey through life. Here in England it is even more incomprehensible and yet no one seems to have missed the unfortunate man picked up by Rouse on the Great North Road on that fatal November night. These men were *somebody's* sons.

Sidney Fox, perhaps the most dastardly criminal in our annals, had, as it was proved beyond doubt at the trial at Lewes, strangled his mother in the Margate hotel bedroom before he set light to the room and gave the alarm. Either he hoped that the fire would not be extinguished till all the evidence of his handiwork had been obliterated, or, at least, that the woman would be certified as having died from asphyxiation. The inquest passed off without any suspicions being aroused and Sidney Fox prepared to claim the insurance money from a short-term policy he had taken out on his mother's life. And here the luck that had hitherto been with him failed him utterly.

CORPUS DELICTI

Insurance people are proverbially fair in their dealings, but there was something a little peculiar in a claim on an accident policy in which the insured had met with accidental death within an hour of the policy lapsing. The company patronised by Mr. Fox placed the matter in the hands of their solicitor, the famous Mr. Crocker who later spread the net that brought Harris and his firebugs to justice, and on Mr. Crocker's advice the claim was contested. And, following the lead of the insurance company, the police of Margate went, somewhat tardily perhaps, into action. An exhumation was ordered and Sir Bernard Spilsbury took charge of the affair. Under the distinguished doctor's expert examination, certain facts became quickly apparent. That Mrs. Fox had died of asphyxiation was definitely ruled out, as there were none of the customary signs in the air passages that are a feature of such cases. Neither was there any distinctive colouring in the blood to suggest the presence of carbon monoxide. Moreover, there were small but definite bruises on the tongue and at the base of the larynx which were, according to the medical evidence, conclusive. Sir Bernard stepped down from the witness-box leaving the jury firmly convinced that the unfortunate Mrs. Fox had died of strangulation and that she had ceased to breathe before the smoke from the fire reached her. Fox's previous record was one long recital of crime and vice. It was suspected that he had once

DISPOSAL BY FIRE

before attempted murder. He was swindler, pervert, blackmailer, everything that is despicable, and his execution at Maidstone Prison on April 8th, 1929, rid the world of one of its foulest inhabitants. The timing of the murder of his mother within an hour of her policy lapsing is surely the stupidest of the many stupid acts that bring criminals to the gallows.

If the absence of carbonised particles in the air passages of Mrs. Fox proved conclusively that the woman had been already dead when the smoke filled the room, so the presence of the sooty deposits proved that Mrs. Budde of Wisconsin was alive under similar conditions. Murder was never proved ; in fact the husband, by his cast-iron alibi, secured a verdict of not guilty when tried for the murder of his wife. But that same day, Dick Budde was found dead in his home, having poisoned himself with strychnine, the agent by which he had been accused of the killing. It was a curious case and once again goes to prove the weakness in relying on fire as a means of disposal. That Virginia Budde died of strychnine poisoning there can be no doubt from the medical testimony, and the unfortunate woman being found locked in a cupboard with the key on the outside was, of course, fair evidence against the theory of suicide, a theory put forward on account of the lady having recently returned to her home from a mental institution.

Budde was a hard-working woodcutter, respected

CORPUS DELICTI

and well liked in the neighbourhood, and on the day of the fire it was proved that he had been out in the forest all day with his axe, and had in this way established a perfect alibi that no police grilling could shake. It was on his return home in the early evening that he discovered the tragedy. Panic-stricken, he rushed to the nearest house and raised the alarm, begging people to come and rescue his wife who, he assured them, had been alone in the house when he had left it that morning. But although there had been much smoke there had been little fire and examination showed that all that had suffered was a cupboard in the bedroom and within this the holocaust had evidently been fierce. The cupboard had been lined with some fireproof material and although the flames had been intense enough to burn through the floor, the door and walls were fairly intact. But below, in the basement, was a heap of ashes that was all that remained of whatever had been in the locked cupboard and had fallen through the flooring. It was among these cinders that the police discovered certain charred pieces of human flesh which, on closer examination, proved to be portions of a woman's body. There was never any doubt as to the remains being those of Virginia Budde.

It was proved at the trial that the only person having access to strychnine was Budde himself, and that the poison had been kept in a locked trunk of which the key never left its owner day or night,

DISPOSAL BY FIRE

being suspended from his neck by a string. Evidence, too, brought to light facts by which it was proved that Budde was not quite such a nice person as had been supposed. Rumours became facts and it was established that, with the departure of Virginia to the mental home, Dick Budde had quickly consoled himself by stepping out on the path of whoopee with his new housekeeper and various accommodating ladies from the surrounding townships. Prohibition was no deterrent to the full enjoyment of these orgies. In fact, it was established that Dick had been supplementing his wood-cutting activities by running a thriving sideline in illicit liquor for some considerable time. Experiments with a specially constructed cupboard lined with identical fireproof material as that in Dick Budde's showed that a fire could smoulder and slowly consume anything within the cupboard without necessarily extending farther than the confined space in which Mrs. Budde undoubtedly had been at the time of the conflagration. A fire could, the prosecution asserted, have been started in the cupboard before Budde left home for the woods and would have completed its deadly work on anything within it before his return. The sooty particles in the woman's air passages proved beyond doubt that she had inhaled the smoke and had been alive after the fire had started. It can only be hoped that her sufferings had been short, and that suffocation had mercifully dulled the excruciating

CORPUS DELICTI

agonies of strychnine poisoning. Whether the grim secret of the murder was Budde's or another's, the fire held that secret for only a few short hours.

In the early morning of September 6th, 1933, the tiny village of Towton in the North of England was roused by the cries of fire. Two women, scantily clad, had rushed from a farm house known as Saxton Grange into the village with the news that their barns were alight and that the garage was already gutted. And in the garage, when the flames at last died down and an examination could be made, was discovered the charred framework of a car and within it something that later proved to be all that remained of the young master of Saxton Grange, Frederick Morton. At first it was taken for granted that the unfortunate man had been trapped by escaping petrol that had in some manner become ignited. But the portions of the body that had been left comparatively undamaged by the flames showed on close inspection that Frederick Morton had been shot through the heart. The ensuing story of illicit love, of blackmail, black treachery and terror that was told in court is too recent in the public memory to call for repetition here. Ernest Brown, a man to whom Morton had been a good and generous master, was duly hanged for the murder in Armley Gaol. Once again fire had proved a slender reed upon which to lean in the disposal of the body.

Travellers in the neighbourhood of Vogelsberg

DISPOSAL BY FIRE

near Weimar were until recently shown a small shrubbery and a ridge of grassy mounds where once had stood the mill buildings and the stream dam of Springolmühle. The spot will never be built upon for, if it is not haunted by ghosts, it is by sinister memories. For the mill was the scene of one of the most dastardly mass murders that have ever shocked the world, and the crime provides still one more instance where it was fondly hoped that fire would screen the criminals and save them from the executioner.

The mill was a prosperous concern and was, in the year 1877, in the occupation of a man named Ludwig Yunker who lived there with his wife and family. Of these, only a little girl, Bertha, and a two-months-old baby survived the tragedy. It was Bertha who escaped from the house of death and gave the alarm, but by the time the fire brigade had been summoned the place was all but gutted and there was nothing for it but to wait till the flames had been extinguished before making further examination. Poor little Bertha could at the moment tell them nothing, being in a state of collapse, but later, when she had recovered, she gave a clear account of what had happened.

Sleeping with her brother in the attic, she had been awakened by sounds downstairs and together the two children had gone to the head of the stairs to seek the cause. Here the boy Hermann had been shot dead at close range and Bertha had scrambled

CORPUS DELICTI

back to the comparative safety of the bedroom attic, but not before she had seen her mother lying dead on the parlour floor at the foot of the stairs. Bertha was a brave little person and she did not lose her head in face of all these horrors, but managed to win clear of the house by a side door as the building began to go up in flames. Before the girl told her story it was thought that Yunger and a man named Reinhardt who had for some time been lodging with the family were the murderers because no sign of their bodies had been found among the debris. But with Bertha telling her story, things assumed an even more sinister aspect. For not only were Hermann and his mother dead but it began to be believed that Yunger and Reinhardt had suffered a like fate.

Bertha's description of the man she had seen in the burning house pointed to a ne'er-do-well of the community, a poacher named Durre, who with his son was at once arrested and questioned. They loudly protested their innocence but they had no chance when faced with the child's story. Desperate for money and knowing that Yunger kept large sums in his house the father and son had decoyed the men away on the pretence of a hunting trip and murdered them in the wood nearby. Then, returning to the house, the assassins continued their work of death, overlooking only Bertha and the baby in its cradle, both of whom they no doubt intended should be consumed in the flames. The

DISPOSAL BY FIRE

younger man at last made a full confession admitting being forced to assist his father whom he accused as being the sole perpetrator of the crimes, but it was abundantly clear that the wholesale slaughter could not have been the work of any one man and the confession availed him nothing. It is pleasant reading that young Durre was beheaded at Weimar on June 14th, 1878.

A strange instance of what is commonly supposed to have been incendiarism in order to hide crime is that of the Berner family in Missouri. Mrs. Berner and her two children were found incinerated among the debris of their home and there was found also a fourth body which, naturally, was taken to be that of the husband and father. But then rumours began to spread. It was noticed that, although the wife's jewellery was found among the ashes, there was no sign of Mr. Berner's ring or the tie-pin he was in the habit of wearing. Then, when it was pointed out that the charred trunk of the fourth body could not very well be that of the master of the house, the police took a hand. For Stewart Berner had been a big man, broad and tall, while the torso found in the debris, even making allowance for the shrinkage by fire, was undoubtedly that of a much slighter man. Neighbours were interviewed, and gradually it was ascertained that the Berner family had not been the ideally happy community they were supposed to have been. There were stories of continual friction and of desperate quarrels

CORPUS DELICTI

between the husband and wife, and Berner was said to have taken infinite pains to prevent any enquiries being made by any of their acquaintances regarding the whereabouts of his family on the day before the fire. He had even taken the trouble to ring up the hostess of Mrs. Berner's bridge club to say that his wife would not be present that evening and he had communicated with the laundress whose day it was to work at the Berner home, telling the woman not to come, as his wife was away staying with friends. It looked uncommonly as though the man had been engaged either in preparing for the holocaust or in even more sinister activities and had wished to divert any attention from his home and family. The discovery that all was not well with Berner in his capacity of postmaster of the town gave credence to the suspicions and the drag-net was spread for Stewart Berner. His accounts at the post office were in bad shape, and it was proved that two officials were on the point of being sent down from headquarters to look into the matter of the discrepancies.

Faced with disgrace and perhaps a long term of imprisonment, taken together with his unhappiness at home, may possibly have suggested to Berner that he would be better off with a clean sheet and a fresh start in life before him. To this day the man has never been traced and, if he was guilty, then, for once, fire has served its purpose

DISPOSAL BY FIRE

and given him ample time to make a getaway. If innocent, then Mr. Berner is the most maligned of men. Medical evidence proved beyond a shadow of a doubt that the body of the fourth person found in the ashes could not have been Stewart Berner but there is nothing to suggest whose it might be. As in the case of Rouse and in that of Snaith here again is an instance of someone just disappearing and apparently never being missed. But as Stewart Berner is not available to speak on his own behalf, the benefit of the doubt must be accorded to him. If alive, he must be fully aware of the suspicions attached to him and surely, had he been able to do so in safety, he would have come forward long before this to give an explanation of his movements on the day previous to the fire. But then that explanation may be difficult. It might also quite possibly be a matter of embarrassment for Mr. Berner to be questioned regarding the identity of the fourth body found among the ashes.

II

Just as Stewart Berner called fire to his aid in an endeavour to cover up his defalcations, giving no thought to the innocent lives that might be sacrificed, so Jacob de Leeuw called fire and explosion to destroy the evidence that, had it been brought against him, would have at least lost him his job as town clerk to Dewetsdorp in the Orange Free

CORPUS DELICTI

State. As it was, his desperate effort to avoid disaster cost him his life. It appears that de Leeuw had matters pretty much in his own hands in dealing with the financial matters connected with the little township and that he helped himself more than once to the mayoral funds, no doubt stilling the voice of conscience by the thought that he would be able to pay back the "borrowed" money before the time came for the auditors' visit.

A gentleman named von Maltitz was at the time mayor of Dewetsdorp and there is no doubt that he had for some time had his suspicions of his town clerk. But it was only after his term of office had expired and he had become a member of the finance committee that he mentioned those suspicions to his successor, the Reverend Mr. Viljoen of the Dutch Reformed Church. It was shortly after this that the committee, which comprised the mayor, Maltitz and a councillor named Ortlepp, decided upon a searching enquiry into the workings of the town clerk's office.

De Leeuw was given a chance. He was warned of the approaching investigation and asked to produce his books, brought up to date, by the time the committee sat. But the task was beyond him. Not only did he lack the ability to falsify the accounts within the time of grace accorded him but, even if he had been able to do this, his cash in hand would show a lamentable discrepancy. To burn the books or say that he had mislaid them would avail

DISPOSAL BY FIRE

him nothing against that shortage of ready money. De Leeuw was faced with imprisonment or, at the best, ignominious discharge from his post. It was then that the man's thoughts turned to murder.

At the appointed time the three committee-men together with de Leeuw and his clerk assembled in the town hall and the proceedings commenced. It was at once perfectly obvious that the defalcations were considerable and during the sitting the town clerk must have seen that there was no hope of escape. Had there been a loophole it may be that he would have restrained himself from springing the trap that he had set for his inquisitors. As it was he had the grace to send his clerk out on a fictitious errand, thus saving one man's life from the ensuing holocaust.

The clerk had not been gone more than a few minutes when Dewetsdorp was shaken by an explosion. The whole town was stunned, and then it was seen that the town hall was in flames. The first man to rush from the inferno was de Leeuw himself who, burnt and smoke-grimed, burst through the assembled crowd and ran in the direction of his home. There is no doubt that he would have been followed had it not been for the heart-rending shrieks that were issuing from the interior of the burning building, which turned the thoughts of the burghers to means of rescue. But it was too late. The three councillors were seen to be staggering from the furnace and, their clothes

CORPUS DELICTI

ablaze, writhing in the courtyard in agony. All three died, Maltitz mercifully soon, the others lingering on, Ortlepp dying the following day and Viljoen two days later.

De Leeuw was found at home where he was in bed having his burns attended to by his wife. Questioned, he told a remarkable story, a story of petrol that he had kept in the office and of dynamite in the safe, this latter for town use against the swarms of rats with which the district was plagued. It was possible, he said, that one of the councillors had been smoking, although he admitted that he did not remember having seen pipe or cigar, and if a match had been thrown carelessly it might have ignited any spilled petrol that might be near the tank. He himself, de Leeuw stated, had been blown into his private office by the force of the explosion and had escaped from a window after seeing that it had been impossible to go to the assistance of the three trapped men.

His story was not believed and de Leeuw was arrested and brought to trial. From the first the case went dead against him. His defalcations were proved up to the hilt, he was known to have experimented with explosives—the possession of the dynamite for rats was well known—and to have made enquiries as to the peculiar action of dynamite. Certain papers that he did not wish to lose had been removed to his home on the very day of the explosion. His clerk had seen his chief taking money

DISPOSAL BY FIRE

from the municipal funds to pay private debts and, although there was evidence in his support, notably that of a plumber who spoke of a leak in the petrol tank, his conviction was considered certain from the opening of the case. He himself was the principal witness for the defence, but his story of what had happened in the tragic office, unsupported as it had to be by reason of his being the sole survivor, failed to convince the court, and De Leeuw was duly hanged by the neck protesting to the very last his innocence of the crime.

The case of Landru is, perhaps, the best known example of disposal by fire, but the story has been so often told that it will hardly bear repetition here. The main interest was, of course, in Landru's behaviour in court and during the police investigations out at his home, investigations in which my old friend the late William Le Queux took part. We often spoke of the case and Le Queux would wax grim indeed as he told me of the little rusty kitchen stove and the pitiful array of burnt bones, stay busks, underwear buttons and hairpins found among the debris of the sinister house out at Gambais. True, the evidence against Landru was circumstantial but it was deadly, as circumstantial evidence can so often be, and Landru was in due course guillotined by Monsieur Deibler in front of the prison at Versailles and the world was rid of an unspeakable villain.

And writing of circumstantial evidence, Mr.

CORPUS DELICTI

Baron Legge at the trial of Mary Blandy at Oxford, in 1752, said that "circumstantial evidence is more convincing and satisfactory than any other kind of evidence because facts cannot lie" and, reading this, I was reminded of a personal experience, a curious combination of circumstances that might easily have caused me, if not to be arrested, to have found myself "detained and questioned" at the police station. I was engaged upon a story in which it was necessary that I should know the correct procedure of the police under certain circumstances. To obtain this I accosted a policeman on Brighton front and asked him whether a man suspected of murder was always cautioned before being questioned, or only if he was definitely charged with the crime. The constable eyed me curiously but gave me the required information, for which I thanked him. A little later I was in my house alone one Sunday afternoon nursing a heavy cold. It was about five o'clock and quite dark and I put out the lights and went upstairs to the bathroom thinking that, perhaps, I might pass the time in having a hot bath as a remedy for my cold. While immersed in the water I heard a knock at the front door but I could do nothing. If this was a casual caller, I told myself, he could come back. I certainly was in no state either of health or dress to go downstairs and let him in. The knock was repeated and then evidently my visitor went away. Later that evening my caller, who

DISPOSAL BY FIRE

happened to be George Graves, the famous comedian, returned, and I did not trouble to worry him with a long story about the bath. That night the news came to us that a girl had been murdered on the golf links that lie at the back of my garden.

Now the unfortunate victim of this dastardly killing was a girl who was cashier at a restaurant which I often visited and although I did not know the young lady personally I wonder what would have happened if the customers of that restaurant had all been questioned. I can visualise the constable recognising in me the man who had asked those pertinent questions regarding the arrest of murder suspects. I can see them asking me where I was between five and six, the time of the murder. I could have told that I was indoors but then George Graves, if questioned, would have said that he had knocked twice and received no answer and that the house had been in darkness. No doubt I would have been able to shuffle out of it somehow but the incident shows what circumstantial evidence can do. That was the golf links murder for which the youth Anderson paid the penalty.

Just as the misdeeds of Arthur Rouse apparently prompted the crime of the Iowa Road and later the tragedy of Miss Evelyn Foster who was found dying in a burning car near Otterburn, so imitation was doubtless the inspiration of the murder of Augustus Lamarre in 1896. In this case, it would appear that Carrara had read all about Professor

CORPUS DELICTI

Webster and Professor Parkman in Boston. Carrara was an Italian by birth but had long been settled in France where he had taken to wife a certain Louise Roulant. Never much of a provider, Carrara was, apparently, quite content to allow others to enjoy the favours of his charming wife and it was this that first suggested the murder, though certainly not from any motives of jealousy.

Money was short in the Carrara household and all was grist that came to the communal mill. Carrara's main occupation in life was the somewhat unusual one of raising mushrooms and for this he had installed a complete fungi bed for the cultivation of the spawn, together with the necessary heating appliances. But when it came to the suggested murder of one of Madame Carrara's wealthy admirers the husband's one-way mind could see no further than a combination of the disposal methods of Webster and the trap originated by Gabrielle Bompard. But the amorous old gentleman who had been selected to play the principal rôle in the tragedy escaped for, quite by chance, another victim presented himself and, as has been said, all was grist that came to the Carrara mill. This victim was an elderly collector employed by one of the banks from which the mushroom grower had borrowed money and who had given notice that he would call on a certain day to collect the interest due. It was when this notice arrived that Carrara's brain really functioned. Why not,

DISPOSAL BY FIRE

he suggested to the amiable Louise, tap the collector on the head and relieve him of the money he would already have collected on his rounds? The idea, simple in its conception as it seemed to the lady, gained at once her entire and enthusiastic approval, her only fear being that perhaps the old man might not have been too fortunate in his collections on that particular morning. It was only when, by a discreet peep into the collector's wallet, he was seen to be carrying what appeared to be a fairly large sum, that action was decided upon. Madame, in gangster parlance, placed the finger on Monsieur Lamarre and her husband did the rest. Everything went according to schedule and then came the dread moment when the method of disposing of the body had to be considered. It was then that Carrara thought of his mushroom bed. There was the furnace ready to hand kept at high pressure of heat for the ventilation of the spawn beds, and surely the flames would soon make short work of the unfortunate Lamarre. The furnace indeed acted up to expectations and, had it not been for other circumstances, it is just possible that here might be still another case where fire had utterly destroyed the evidence of crime. But those other circumstances were too much for the Carraras.

First and foremost there were, as in the case of Landru at Gambais, the vast columns of smoke issuing from the furnace chimney for hours together depositing an evil-smelling soot over the

CORPUS DELICTI

neighbouring houses in the rue Etienne-Dolet and, naturally, duly noticed by the other residents in that street, who seem not to have been any too well disposed to the Carraras anyway. And so into the police department of the district poured letters of protest that would no doubt have had no great result but a domiciliary visit to Mr. Carrara ordering him to abate the nuisance. But the department had also received notice from the bank that one of their most trusted messengers had failed to return from his rounds and, from enquiries made, it appeared that this messenger, a certain Monsieur Lamarre, had been last seen visiting a house in the rue Etienne-Dolet. A list of the places he had to visit had been kept by the bank and the tracing by a process of elimination of the old man's movements had been a simple matter for the authorities. There being no question whatever of the messenger's honesty there was but one construction to place on the affair and that was foul play. The neighbours' complaints regarding the smoke from the Carrara house from this moment took on a new and more sinister aspect. Examination showed that the time had been too short for the furnace entirely to destroy the deposits on the iron-barred cauldron in which the coke and charcoal was burnt and the end was twenty years imprisonment for Madame Carrara while her husband was carried in a state of utter collapse to the guillotine in the Place de la Roquette on June 25th, 1898.

DISPOSAL BY FIRE

The murderer of old Mr. and Mrs. Yates in their house by the Tradewater River has never been brought to justice and it would seem that here is another of the cases where fire has succeeded in obliterating every vestige of a crime and throwing up a smoke screen between a killer and the gallows. True, a man was arrested and put on his trial but he was acquitted, as the evidence against him was both thin and circumstantial, and the accused had a perfectly clean record. It was on April 17th, 1935, that the little Kentucky village on the banks of the Tradewater was roused by the crackling of flames and it was seen that the wooden house in which old Mr. and Mrs. Yates had lived for the better part of forty years was a blazing furnace. All efforts to beat down the flames were of no avail and, although it was at first thought that perhaps the two aged inmates might have escaped and sought shelter at a neighbour's house, it was not long before it became evident that both had perished. As the debris cooled and it became possible to make an examination, the bodies of Yates and his wife were found and, what was even worse, it was established that the woman had been shot and killed before the house had been set alight. Suicide was ruled out and murder clearly indicated.

Old Yates had made a good living by running a ferry boat across the Tradewater River before the building of the Kiwanis Bridge robbed him of his concession. After that, the old man farmed a few

CORPUS DELICTI

acres, more for the sake of keeping himself employed than from any thought of profit. It was rumoured that the old couple had put aside a considerable amount of money and that, on account of the failure of a banking concern in the past by which they had lost money, Yates thought it best to keep what he had in the house. It was said that the paper containing the secret of the hiding-place of their little fortune was sewn into the seam of the old lady's petticoat, an unfortunate place, as it happened, in which to secrete so valuable a piece of information. Needless to say, not a stitch of clothing had escaped the fury of the flames. An empty tin that had contained five gallons of petrol was found, and it is clear that the unknown murderer after killing the old couple had set light to the house in order to consume any evidence that might tell against him. Mr. and Mrs. Yates's fortune passed with their passing, but whether into the pockets of their killer or into smoke may never be known.

Perhaps the classic crime in which fire was employed in an attempt at disposal is that of the murder of Dr. George Parkman of Boston by a fellow doctor, John Webster, Professor of Chemistry at Harvard. The case has been told so often that it need be touched on here only so far as it goes to show how ineffectual disposal by fire can be even when there was so much in the murderer's favour as here. The laboratory furnace at the Medical College in Boston was under Webster's care, he

DISPOSAL BY FIRE

could keep the doors leading to it closed or open at will, and by locking himself in could give his whole undivided attention to the gruesome work on hand. But the very care he took to keep the laboratory locked proved his undoing, for the caretaker, knowing that the door was generally kept open, began to wonder what was happening on the other side of it and why the walls of the room itself were so hot to the touch. Moreover, the doctor had been somewhat strange of late and there had been curious rumours floating about the college. It was known that Professor Parkman was due to call on Webster to receive payment of certain monies the doctor owed him and for which Parkman had been of late pressing for settlement. In fact, Webster had admitted to Parkman's brother that the professor had called as arranged and been duly paid in full. Echoes of these rumours had reached the ears of the caretaker and the man had been greatly intrigued also by the visit of police constables to the college. Deciding to investigate he bored a hole through the wall into the basement in which was the furnace and, peering through, saw certain portions of what his experience in the dissecting room of the college told him were human remains. The police were at once informed and the ashes of the furnace raked out for inspection.

That there were charred bones among the ashes admitted of no doubt but it might have been a difficult matter to identify these as having formed

CORPUS DELICTI

part of the structure of any particular individual had it not been for a set of false teeth that had not been entirely destroyed. These established identity and built up the *corpus delicti* that sent Dr. Webster to the gallows in August, 1850, and avenged the murder of George Parkman.

III

Another murder that doubtless owes its inception to the Rouse case is that of Walter Spatchett in January 1933. It was at first thought, as no doubt the murderer had hoped it would be thought, that the body found in the burning shed in Camden Town was that of the owner of the premises, Samuel Furnace. It was as Furnace that the unfortunate victim of the fire that had partly demolished the shed was taken to the mortuary, and indeed the remains were at first thought by Furnace's father-in-law to be those of his daughter's husband. The following day, when a closer examination could be made, the man withdrew the vague identification of the night before and it was certified beyond doubt that the body was not that of Samuel Furnace.

It was then that the police found among the half-burned debris in the ruined shed a post office savings book belonging to a rent collector, Walter Spatchett, in the employ of Messrs. Westacott & Sons, a local firm of estate agents with whom Furnace himself had once held an appointment.

DISPOSAL BY FIRE

The two men, Spatchett and Furnace, were acquainted and when the police were notified that the former had failed to return from his collecting round they made enquiries which led to the undoubted identification of the dead man as Walter Spatchett. It was then asked how it came about that a man in danger of being burnt alive had remained seated on a stool apparently waiting for death when it would have been easy for him either to have unlocked the door or burst his way out of the flimsy structure. It will be remembered that in the case of Virginia Budde the unfortunate woman was found to have been burnt while locked in a cupboard with the key on the outside. The inference in either case is obvious. Like Virginia Budde, Walter Spatchett had been incapable of resisting the oncoming flames, the former on account of being in the throes of strychnine poisoning, the latter on account of a bullet wound in the vicinity of the heart. Walter Spatchett, it was proved, had in fact been dead for several hours before the burning of the shed. It was known that on the day of his death, a Monday, Spatchett would have a considerable sum of money upon him, collected in the course of his duties—just as poor old Lamarre had in his possession when he called on the mushroom grower, Carrara—and there is little doubt but that the crime had been premeditated and carefully thought out before the shot had been fired and the match applied.

CORPUS DELICTI

The Furnace case is remarkable for the intensity of the man-hunt that was set in motion for the murderer and for his dramatic capture in Southend by Superintendent Cornish, Chief Inspector Yandell and Detective-Inspector Ockley. A further thrill was added by the fact that although Furnace was thoroughly searched on being charged at Kentish Town Police Station he managed to commit suicide in his cell. The weather was cold and he had been permitted to wear his overcoat, in the lining of which he had been able to secrete a small bottle of poison. In this way Samuel Furnace cheated the gallows and incidentally saved the country quite a considerable sum of money. And, as with Rouse and Snaith and the others, fire as a means of disposal had failed utterly.

I wonder whether it is quite in order to place Mr. Stanger under the heading of fire. The case certainly has a right to be included in the stories of disposal although, perhaps, it ought to be accorded a chapter to itself under the heading of "The Perfect Disposal," for the remains of Mr. Stanger were never found and his disappearance dates back over half a century. In the spring of 1882 there appeared in some of the London newspapers an agony advertisement asking for information regarding a certain Napoleon Stanger, a German baker of Lever Street, Clerkenwell, who had disappeared mysteriously without leaving any traces. The advertisement was supposed to have been

DISPOSAL BY FIRE

inserted by a relative of Mr. Stanger who had apparently harboured suspicions that all was not well.

One cannot blame him, for Napoleon Stanger was certainly not the man suddenly to leave wife and business and banking account and go out into the night, as it were, to start life anew. It can be readily understood, however, that if it had been merely a case of leaving Mrs. Stanger and making a clean break with his past Napoleon might have been tempted, but the man had built up a good little business by hard work and had saved money and was devotedly attached to both—and yet money and business were left behind. From all accounts Mrs. Stanger left much to be desired as a wife ; she drank heavily, she was abusive and thought nothing of using physical violence against Napoleon when in her drunken tempers. Moreover it would seem that she had a lover. Also she was stout, coarse and certainly no beauty.

And so, enter Mr. Strumm, the complete villain. Franz Strumm, also a Teutonic baker of bread, had not been as successful in business as his compatriot and it was his appointment as assistant to Stanger that first brought him into close intimacy with Elizabeth Stanger. And so we have the eternal triangle which would have called for no great comment in Clerkenwell had not Mr. Stanger disappeared. Even this did little to rouse the interest of the neighbours, who were for the most

CORPUS DELICTI

part too much occupied with their own affairs to worry about those of others. There was no informer to go to the police, for the folk of Clerkenwell in those days were never too anxious to have dealings with authority. But when Mr. Strumm took up his residence at Stanger's and was seen everywhere with Elizabeth on his arm even Clerkenwell began to talk. Here we see an analogy with the Crippen affair, and one wonders how it is that men with guilty secrets on their minds can so brazenly risk exposure. Had it not been for Miss Le Neve wearing Belle Elmore's jewellery at the Music Hall Benevolent Ball all might have been well with the little doctor and his mistress. Had Mr. Strumm kept in the background and courted his Elizabeth with discretion all might have been well with him.

And then Strumm, greatly daring, removed the name of Stanger from the shop front and proudly substituted that of Strumm. No doubt he regretted the act, but it was too late. The shop was banned and the neighbours no longer spoke in whispers but loudly voiced their suspicions. It seemed that this little Napoleon had, like his illustrious namesake, met his Waterloo. So loud were the voices that the police had to take action and it is certainly a wonder that they had been content to stay their hand so long. Mrs. Stanger wilted under the withering looks of her neighbours and erstwhile friends and went to live with Mrs. Strumm, who

DISPOSAL BY FIRE

would seem to have diplomatically effaced herself when her husband stepped into Stanger's shoes.

Strumm and Mrs. Stanger were at last arrested but not for the murder of Mr. Stanger. Acting very much as the Federal agents of America acted with Mr. Al Capone the couple were arrested and charged with certain frauds connected with the property of the missing Napoleon. There is little doubt but that the capital charge would have been preferred against them had it been possible to produce a *corpus delicti* or even any appreciable human fragment that could be proved to have formed part of Napoleon Stanger's anatomy.

Napoleon was never found but it was whispered that, if one were given time, wonders could be worked by the fierce action of a spacious baker's oven. The suggestion conjures up dreadful thoughts, and we will leave it at that. Mrs. Stanger, although committed for trial with Mr. Strumm, was not proceeded against, and the full brunt of the sentence pronounced by Mr. Justice Hawkins of ten years penal servitude was borne by Mr. Strumm. He served his time and after his release was supposed to have returned to his native Germany, there to rejoin his wife and Mrs. Stanger, between which two ladies there seems to have existed a sincere if somewhat puzzling friendship.

One cannot but think that Mr. Justice Hawkins

CORPUS DELICTI

in passing sentence had in his mind a certain gentleman named Napoleon Stanger, in much the same way as the judge of the Supreme Court in Chicago in sentencing Capone to fourteen years in the dreaded Alcatraz Prison, for evasion of income tax, must have had in mind the countless murders for which that gentleman had in the parlance of the Chicago underworld "beaten the rap."

Imitation in crime makes one wonder whether those two precious rascals, Kreuger and Von Arbin, who murdered their friend Flyborg in Stockholm in 1926, had ever heard or read of a certain crime that occurred as far back as 1567 in Scotland. For in that year, Lord Bothwell with, for all we know to the contrary, Mary Queen of Scots as an accessory, eliminated Mary's husband, Lord Darnley, and although the *coup de grâce* was administered with cold steel this was but an afterthought when it became obvious that the victim was likely to escape from the original idea, which had been to employ gunpowder. Gunpowder was indeed tried, but its success fell far short of that desired by Lord Bothwell.

Von Arbin was a member of one of the foremost families in Scandinavia and his association with such a man as Alexander Kreuger was looked on askance by his friends and connections. Kreuger was a youth of evil reputation but who flattered himself that he, too, came from aristocratic stock being, as he was always given to understand, the

DISPOSAL BY FIRE

son of an officer of high rank in the Swedish army. What the precise connection was between this dissolute youth and the gallant soldier is not known, but it is not disputed that the boy from birth was for some unknown reason, allowed to bear his name. It was not till his arrest that the officer publicly disclaimed any parentage and volunteered the fact that Kreuger was the son of a Jew named Solomon and that, although he had allowed him to use the name of Kreuger, he desired to have nothing further to do with the young man.

Kreuger was a poseur, a dilettante, a morphia addict and a degenerate of the most scandalous type. He had travelled largely and the continental underworlds knew him as one of themselves. It was in disreputable conditions that he first met Von Arbin and between the two there grew up a scandalous bond of friendship. It was on their return to Stockholm that Flyborg enters into the story.

Partner with Von Arbin in a wholesale tea business, Flyborg was none too well pleased to find the young ne'er-do-well in and out of the offices at all hours. The mere presence of the younger man would put a period to any business activities for the day, for Von Arbin seemed not to be able to withstand the suggestions of Kreuger that a trip into the country or a drinking bout around the hotels of Stockholm were both far more desirable than stewing in an office over musty

CORPUS DELICTI

figures, and that the wines of the country were far more worth the tasting than Pekoe or Souchong. It is thought that in objecting to his partner's loose way of living Flyborg was not only trying to save the business from bankruptcy, but was no doubt influenced by the fact that two blacks did not make a white and that one roué and spend-thrift in a business was enough. Which suggests that Flyborg himself was not above reproach. And at last, as is inevitable in cases such as this, bankruptcy faced them. Money had to be obtained and quickly.

Imitative as always, Von Arbin and his young friend could see no further than the old established fraud of arson and, curiously enough, they met at first with considerable success. Their first fire passed without suspicion and was quickly followed by a second. This also brought grist to the Von Arbin mill. Then, growing bolder and more greedy, they set fire to two houses in the same year and this time the insurance scrutineers began to suspect that all was not well. Great as had been the profits accruing from these frauds, the money was soon spent, and the men were faced with the problem of looking about them for another source of income. Again they turned to insurance but this time human life was to take the place of fire. Criminally, a perfectly logical sequence.

Both men hated Flyborg with the hate of hell and it was suggested that two birds might be killed

DISPOSAL BY FIRE

with one stone. But how to do the killing in safety was the question. The entire lack of originality shown in the first attempt was pitiful. Von Arbin, having arranged for himself what he considered to be a cast-iron alibi, which was in fact as full of holes as a sieve, rang at Flyborg's door and on that gentleman making an appearance promptly knocked him senseless with a crowbar, continuing the attack till he thought his victim to be dead. But men of the stamp of Mr. Flyborg are not so easily disposed of, and Von Arbin and Kreuger were back where they had started from. Flyborg had been insured for over five thousand pounds and something had to be done before the next premium payment became due. And now we suspect either Von Arbin or Mr. Kreuger of reading Scottish history, for their next move was to break into a railway store and steal some eight or nine pounds of high explosive.

The movements of the murderers were, after this, futile in the extreme. It is to be supposed that Flyborg had not recognised his attacker at his front door, for when Von Arbin, shortly afterwards, invited him out for an evening's enjoyment, Flyborg accepted with alacrity. The evening was convivial and, when at last the three returned to Von Arbin's rooms, Flyborg was very much the worse for drink. This, said the killers, was their opportunity. A cab was ordered and the unconscious Flyborg hoisted into it by his two friends. The box containing

CORPUS DELICTI

the explosives had been fixed by one of the men on to the luggage grid of the taxi while the other was making Flyborg comfortable on the cushions and, when at last the taxi departed for the drunken man's home, it trailed behind it a fuse that had been carefully lighted by Von Arbin. They had only a minute and a half to wait for an explosion that shook the whole of Stockholm to its very foundations.

Dynamite is strange in its action and although the explosion made poor Flyborg as though he had never been, it spared the driver as Darnley had been spared at Kirk o' Fields. And a fate that sent portions of Flyborg scattering over the roofs of Stockholm for hundreds of yards around decided that a card bearing his name should not be utterly destroyed. From this starting-point it was not difficult to follow the trail to the murderers, who were duly sent to penal servitude for life.

It is not often that the gangster deigns to make any effort to dispose of the body of his victim. It is enough for him that his machine-gun has done its deadly work and that he himself has time in which to make his escape. But there is one case in which one of Brooklyn's big shots was the victim of a murder which has many points of similarity to the Rouse case. It was the time of the great gang feud which culminated in the notorious Dutch Schultz, the beer baron, being shot to death in a Newark eating-house.

DISPOSAL BY FIRE

For some time the homicide squads had been busy tracing to its source the vendetta that was wiping out, one by one, so many of the racketeers of Manhattan and Brooklyn. One wonders why the police are so anxious to stop these gang massacres. It would surely be as well to let the good work continue till by a process of elimination the world was rid of the thugs who make life for decent people a nightmare of fears of kidnapping and stray bullets. This particular vendetta, which almost equals the horror of the infamous Valentine Day massacre in Chicago, began with the shooting of two gangsters, Holinski and Dolak, on Third Avenue in New York. This killing was followed by the murder of one of Brooklyn's big shot racketeers, Joe Amberg, and his chauffeur, Morris Kessler. Although there was no direct evidence it was supposed that the killing so far had been organised by Dutch Schultz. And now we come to the part of the story where the killers resorted to concealment, at first by the old-established method of the trunk, and later by fire. The trunk was discovered lying in the street, where it had undoubtedly been thrown from a passing car. It contained the body of Victim Number 5, Frankie Tietlebaum. Victims Number 6 and 7 were Cohen and Red Blaumer. Victim Number 8 was Joseph Amberg's brother, "Pretty Face" Amberg, and it was this gentleman whom the murderers attempted to eliminate by means of the Rouse method.

CORPUS DELICTI

Early one October morning the police were called to a burning car standing near the end of Manhattan Bridge in Brooklyn. Extinguishers were brought into play and the dead body of an incinerated man, entirely naked, was taken from the smouldering debris of the car. The man's face was quite unrecognisable but by chance the hands had escaped serious damage and the fingerprints identified the body as being that of "Pretty Face" Amberg. That was on October 23rd, 1935, and again it was supposed that Dutch Schultz was the originator of the killings. Whether the police had made up their minds to tackle the problem from this end will never be known, as the luck of the game now turned against the beer baron. Seated, on October 24th, with three of his lieutenants, Abe Frank, Berman, and Rosencrantz in the Palace Chop House in Newark, Schultz was discussing the situation that had arisen on account of the identification of "Pretty Face" when the door opened and a man entered—and immediately the place was filled with the ping of bullets, the acrid smell of powder and the screams of the diners.

The murders of Amberg, Kessler, Tietlebaum, Brooks and Red Blaumer were brought home to a drug fiend, Albert Stern, who committed suicide. Stern had at one time been one of Dutch Schultz's gunmen and it may be that he acted for both camps. It was never known whether he was the killer of the beer baron, but it was certainly estab-

DISPOSAL BY FIRE

lished that the drug-soaked degenerate was in Newark the night of the death of Dutch Schultz. Quite a party of thugs must have crowded into Charon's boat that October as it pushed off across the dark waters of the Styx. The gangsters themselves had in a few days made a bigger clean-up of the Augean stables than the electric chair seems able to accomplish in as many months.

The murder of Miss Keyse at The Glen, in Devonshire, in 1884, has lived long in the public memory more on account of it being found impossible to hang the man convicted of the atrocious crime, who on the recommendation of the Home Secretary of the day, Sir William Harcourt, was reprieved and his sentence commuted to penal servitude for life. Three times the trap failed to function and Berry the executioner later discovered this to be accounted for by the fact that one of the flanges was faulty in construction, and that when a man was standing on the trap the edges were so firmly pressed together that they supported each other. But although the public interest in this latter happening somewhat took from the interest in the crime itself, the story of the Babbacombe murder is well worth telling.

Miss Keyse seems to have been one of those lavender-scented old ladies of the Victorian era. She delighted in good works and lived a placid, uneventful life at her charming thatched cottage on the Devonshire Coast. The household consisted

of three maid-servants, the youngest of whom was a pretty girl named Elizabeth Harris, and certain out-of-doors workers. It was Elizabeth Harris's half-brother, who was convicted of the murder of his mistress and who later was to undergo the hideous ordeal of the execution morning and the subsequent twenty years of penal servitude.

It was on Elizabeth's recommendation that the boy was taken into the employ of Miss Keyse. Her half-brother, she told her mistress, was out of work, and all but destitute and, although there was no real vacancy at The Glen, Miss Keyse made a job for him, giving him board and lodging and pocket-money of half a crown a week. The wage was not a large one, but in those days money went a long way in out-of-the-way villages in England, and the lad duly took up his position as under-gardener at The Glen. But the youth was of a moody disposition and to his mind half a crown a week was more or less of an insult to a boy who worked as hard as he could. That he voiced his discontent to his fellow servants is certain, for the two elder maids, to whom Miss Keyse appears to have been a remarkably kind mistress, went to her with their tales of friction in the kitchen. Miss Keyse, with the true Victorian outlook on life, regarded her servants as her own particular moral charge, and she sent for the under-gardener, remonstrated with him upon his unchristian

DISPOSAL BY FIRE

behaviour and no doubt read him an uplift lecture on the "God bless the squire and his relations" theme. Moreover, as a salutary lesson to mend his ways for the future, Miss Keyse reduced the boy's wages to two shillings. That saving of sixpence a week possibly signed Miss Keyse's death-warrant . . . and so we come to the night of the tragedy, November 15th, 1884.

On that night Elizabeth Harris was ill in bed, but the other servants attended family prayers, which Miss Keyse held every night in the dining-room of The Glen. The under-gardener attended and was apparently as devout and attentive as usual and the prayer meeting passed off without incident. The servants then retired to bed, leaving Miss Keyse alone, writing up her diary as was the custom with Victorian ladies. In the early hours of the morning, about four o'clock, Elizabeth Harris awoke to find her bedroom filled with smoke, and leaping from her bed she ran downstairs, calling for help as she ran. Her cries were answered by her half-brother and together the two made for the room from which the smoke seemed to come, the dining-room in which Miss Keyse had been left writing the night before.

Here they found the body of the mistress of The Glen, her clothes smouldering and her throat cut from ear to ear. Whoever had done the deed had clearly intended that his crime should be obliterated

CORPUS DELICTI

by the flames, for paper and combustible material had been placed near the body of the murdered woman and paraffin freely sprinkled to assist the holocaust. It was a futile effort, the poor lady's injuries being such as could easily have been specified even had the body been burnt to a cinder, for flames cannot sever a head half from the body with a clean knife cut. Suspicion fell immediately on the under-gardener and there is no doubt that the other servants took the opportunity of informing the police, truly or otherwise, of the threats that the boy had been uttering at The Glen. The finding of a chopper and knife stained with human blood and the mute evidence of a paraffin tin sealed the accused's fate and he was duly convicted. There was no doubt at the time of the trial as to the justice of the jury's verdict but when the hangman's trap refused three times to carry out the death sentence there were many who saw in the happening a sign of Divine intervention, and much sympathy was expressed for a man called upon to undergo so terrible an ordeal.

Another instance of disposal by fire was that of Burnham Abbey Farm in 1853. The farm was situated in a lonely district some four or five miles from Windsor and was in the possession of a Mr. Ralph Goodwin who had as his housekeeper a woman named Mary Ann Sturgeon. His groom was a man with the somewhat curious name of Moses Hatto and there were certain other farm-

DISPOSAL BY FIRE

hands who occupied a cottage in the grounds. It was Mr. Goodwin's custom to spend two nights a week at the house of a relative living some little distance away and on these nights, as he would be home late, he left instructions that the servants were not to wait up but were to leave his candle in the hall for him and a light burning. On the night of the tragedy—which, curiously enough, was in November, the month favoured by the murderer of Miss Keyse and Arthur Rouse, two other fire disposers—Mr. Goodwin had returned to Burnham Abbey to find there was no candle for him and no light left burning. It was as he was pondering on this disruption of the ordered routine that he smelt the acrid odour of burning and at once gave the alarm, rousing Hatto and the men sleeping in the cottage. When at last the flames were extinguished, it was found that the housekeeper, Mary Ann Sturgeon, had lost her life. Her charred body was found in her own room but, as in the case of Miss Keyse, it was soon seen that her death had come by an agency other than fire. Moreover it was clear that someone had taken pains that the fire should obtain a good hold, for not only were papers piled about the body of the unfortunate housekeeper, but a deal table had been broken up and used to feed the flames.

Hatto gave evidence at the inquest. Although he slept only a few feet from the room of the murder he swore that he had heard nothing but a

CORPUS DELICTI

slight noise and it was freely commented upon that this was strange, considering the murderer must have used great violence, broken up a table and dragged the woman's body across the floor before starting his fire. Surely all this could not have been done without some sound reaching the sleeping groom. Hatto's answers to the questions showered upon him were deemed to be contradictory and the man was arrested and later stood his trial at the Assizes at Aylesbury, where the judge summed up decidedly in his favour. But the jury thought otherwise and after his conviction Hatto set all doubt at rest by making a full confession. Here again it was a case of friction below stairs. There had been bad blood between the house-keeper and the groom for a long time and this hatred that had been simmering in Hatto's heart was brought to boiling point by no greater a matter than the suspicion that the woman had brought him half a pint of beer with his supper, instead of a pint. A sixpence and half a pint of beer—on such slender motives hangs the grim spectre of murder. Lee escaped the gallows, Hatto was hanged at Aylesbury.

It was fire that was the undoing of Thomas Cook, who had a bookbinding business in Wellington Street, Leicester. Poor Cook must have been in desperate straits, for it was a paltry debt owed to a London firm on account of binding tools that drove him to murder. Mr. Pass, travelling for the

DISPOSAL BY FIRE

firm in question, arriving at Leicester, put up at the Stag and Pheasant where he made certain enquiries regarding the financial stability of his firm's clients in the town, particularly asking for information with regard to Mr. Cook. Mr. Pass left the Stag and Pheasant with the intention of calling at Wellington Street, which he did, receiving payment of the sum of twelve shillings from Cook and a promise that, if he returned later in the day, he would receive further payment of the account between them. This, presumably, Mr. Pass did, and that was the last seen of him. It was the volume of smoke issuing from the chimney of the bookbinding shop that drew the attention of Cook's neighbours and led to the discovery of certain unburnt portions of anatomy which the police, assisted by the evidence of the landlord of the Stag and Pheasant had no difficulty in assembling into Mr. Pass of London.

CHAPTER VI

IN GENERAL

SO ready are people to take it for granted that a man or woman who has disappeared has been murdered, and so necessarily buried, that one calls to mind a certain case of long ago that so deeply intrigued no less a person than the great Abraham Lincoln that we find it mentioned in many of his letters to his personal friends. The story concerns three brothers named Trailor and it provides a first-class mystery that almost equals on land that of the famous *Marie Celeste* on the high seas. The three brothers had throughout their lives been on the most friendly terms and there seems to have been no evidence of there having ever been trouble among them. Two of them lived in the same village and the other had his home some miles away.

Visits were frequent between them and on the occasion of which we write the two had decided to pay the third a week-end visit. As a travelling companion they had taken along with them a third man, one Nathan Fisher, a bachelor and a man-of-all-work, and so frugal in his dealings that

IN GENERAL

it was rumoured that he was possessed of considerable money and that, not trusting banks, was in the habit of carrying the major portion of his wealth on his person. Fisher was also accepted, not perhaps quite as the village idiot, but as one who was subject to occasional lapses of memory. This, taken with his frugality, would not seem to indicate him as anything in the nature of a boon companion on a trip, and this, perhaps, was taken into account when it was later suggested that the Trailors in picking on Nathan had other ideas in their minds than mere companionship.

However the three travellers arrived safely at the home of the third brother Traylor and received a warm welcome. Supper was partaken of and then the four men went out to take a look round the town and walk a little in the forest in the cool of the evening. It was late when the party returned, or rather three of the party, for Nathan Fisher was no longer with them. Questioned as to his absence, the brothers expressed surprise that he had not already returned. For they had been walking in the woods, they said, when suddenly they had noticed that Fisher was not with them. Knowing his moods and remembering the lapses of memory to which he was subject, they had, after calling loudly for him and receiving no reply, thought it more than likely that he had returned alone. But there and then the three brothers insisted on going back to the forest and searching high and low for

CORPUS DELICTI

their vanished friend. All through the next day they continued the search, beating the undergrowth and making their way into the densest and less accessible depths of the woodlands. But to no avail. There was but one conclusion to come to and that was that Nathan, suffering perhaps from one of those unfortunate lapses of his, had decided to leave the party and make his way back to his home town alone.

The man's peculiarities being well-known, the disappearance of Nathan Fisher caused very little stir in the community and after a few days' stay the two brothers returned home fully expecting to find Fisher waiting for them. But the man had not been seen and now the gossipers of both villages began to air their views. The Trailors, it was said, were spending rather more freely than usual and although they showed a sympathetic interest in their old friend they apparently were willing to take the fact of his disappearance as one of those things that Fate sends to man and which are beyond their understanding. It was not until it was spread abroad that one of the gold pieces that had belonged to Nathan Fisher had been traced to the possession of the elder Trailor that the vague whisperings became open denunciations and the police were forced to take action.

Of course the Trailors were questioned, but all the grilling to which they were subjected seemed to trouble them not at all. Poor Nathan had dis-

IN GENERAL

appeared and that was the end of the matter. Had the man been found dead and the Trailors proved to have been the last men seen in his company, then there might be some excuse for the outrage of their arrest. As it was, there was nothing by which they could be held. And then, when it was decided to release the brothers through lack of evidence, the Trailors themselves fought against their release. Vague rumblings had penetrated from the outside world into their cells, the rumblings of a mob out for vengeance. To the howling crowd outside the prison gates calling loudly for a lynching it mattered not at all whether Nathan Fisher were found or not. Its blood was up and if the law did not know how to deal with the Trailors, then it would show the law its duty. So, as gaol was the safest place, in gaol the Trailors stayed.

. And then one of the brothers confessed. He told a most remarkable story. During that evening stroll in the woods he had lagged a little in the rear and on looking ahead he had been amazed to see that his two brothers had set upon Nathan Fisher and were engaged in beating the life out of him. He had tried in vain to deter them but by the time he had ceased remonstrating the poor man was dead. It was then that his brothers had threatened him with a like fate if he did not swear to keep silent as to what he had seen. To make this promise binding, they had forced him to take part in the temporary concealment of the body.

CORPUS DELICTI

During the digging of a shallow grave he had been stationed sentinel to give warning of the approach of any other walker in the forest that evening. The following night the same thing happened, the third brother being stationed as before as a look-out while the actual murderers dug up the remains of poor old Nathan and removed them to a more secure hiding-place.

On this night they had driven to the forest in a buggy and Michael told graphically how he had seen the body placed in the vehicle and then had followed it to a mill-pond about a mile from the scene of the murder. Here again he had remained on guard some distance away and had waited there at his post till his brothers returned with the empty buggy.

That was Michael's story grilled out of him by the police. It set the whole countryside in a ferment. Search-parties were organised and that same day the water from the mill-pond was drained off but there was no sign of Fisher. But, plain for everyone to see, were the marks in the soft earth surrounding the pond where the wheels of a cart had been backed to the water's edge. The search continued, every inch of the country between where the murder was supposed to have been committed and the mill-pond was probed and dug, every inch of undergrowth searched by men and dogs. But nothing of Nathan Fisher could be found, although at the spot indicated by Michael as the scene of the

IN GENERAL

killing there were undoubted signs of a struggle having taken place. Bushes were beaten down, grass and bracken trampled and twigs broken.

What would have happened then to the three Trailors one can only guess at, but for a happening that was every bit as strange as the disappearance that had caused their arrest. That was the reappearance of Nathan Fisher himself in the best of health and wondering what all the fuss was about. There the matter of the murder charge fell to the ground, for a *corpus delicti* has at least to be dead before it can perform the functions demanded of it. The brothers were liberated and congratulations took the place of lynching. On the matter of his confession Michael would say nothing and it was supposed that the third degree through which he had undoubtedly been put by the police had broken down his reasoning powers, and that he had taken the line of least resistance of escaping from his grilling. He was not pressed for an explanation. Neither, it would seem, was Nathan Fisher. Lapses of memory and amnesia can account for many things and the community were evidently content to let it go at that. Abraham Lincoln died with the mystery unsolved and unsolved it is to this day. Confession or not, there was no doubt ample confirmation for Michael's story, the wheel marks, the signs of the struggle, but, well, there it is!

Two sub-normal incidents led to the execution in Utah Prison of a man named Peter Mortensen on

CORPUS DELICTI

November 20th, 1903, for the murder of a man named Hay. There is little doubt but that under other conditions the result of the trial would have been precisely the same, but it is a fact that the killer's wife, who had after her husband's arrest left the town to stay with her sister, talking in her sleep, together with a dream of the victim's father-in-law helped considerably in first fixing suspicion on to Mortensen and indicating a possible line of police enquiry. Hay was a collector in the employ of a Utah business house to whom Mortensen owed a large sum of money. When on a certain afternoon Mortensen called at the office and made the request that their collector should call to receive payment it was arranged that young Hay should do so. The reason for the personal call was that the money was all in gold and Mortensen did not care to take the risk of carrying it about. If Hay would make out the receipt and bring it with him the transaction could be carried through conveniently and expeditiously.

When young Hay failed to show up at the office in the morning enquiries were made at his home, when it was disclosed by Hay's wife that her husband had left the house the previous evening to call on Mortensen but had not returned all night. The wife had been on the point of ringing through to the police when the office manager arrived. Before calling on the authorities the manager paid a visit to Mortensen and was informed that Hay had

IN GENERAL

duly called and had been paid, Mortensen showing the receipted bill and describing how he had paid in gold, which Hay had placed in his outer overcoat pockets, and how he had then left for home. Now Hay was a man of excellent reputation, a devoted husband and father, and a citizen against whom there had never been a breath of suspicion in any shape or form. But, versed as were the police in the double games that can be played by the most innocent-seeming of men, they were taking no chances, and when it was reported to them that a beautiful girl who had been an inmate of one of the houses of ill fame in Salt Lake City had also disappeared they linked the disappearance of Hay with that of the lovely prostitute, thereby smirching both Hay's financial and moral honour. Two things, however, served to clear the young man, one of them being that the girl was found living in a distant city in company with one of the clients of the said house of ill fame, and the other the discovery of William Hay's body buried under a few inches of earth near the railway line. There was no doubt that the man had been brutally murdered and it is here that the sub-normal enters the story.

For Hay's father-in-law dreamed a dream in which he had seen the murder of his son by his neighbour Peter Mortensen. For some time he was dubious about telling what he had dreamed but when the story of Hay's leaving Mortensen's

CORPUS DELICTI

house with his gold in his overcoat pocket was told him he decided to speak. For Hay's overcoat had no pockets and in this matter Peter Mortensen had undoubtedly lied. On this information Mortensen was questioned and although there were certain elements of suspicion against him they were not thought to be strong enough to secure a conviction for murder. Facts are required rather than the stuff that dreams are made of, and there were no incriminating bloodstains on Mortensen's clothing or in his house, nor were there any other signs to link him up with the death and burial of William Hay. He certainly owned a pistol and it was shown that one cartridge had been recently discharged. But the bullet that had killed young Hay had by the medical evidence been of '44 calibre while Mortensen's weapon was a '33. Questioned as to the reason why he should have so large a sum of money in the house in gold Mortensen had a perfectly logical explanation. He was in fear, he said, of some legal judgment being given against him in a civil action pending in the courts and he had given up his banking account so that the Court would not be able to force him to a disclosure of resources. Had the action gone against him Mortensen would have hidden his gold and declared himself bankrupt. Dishonest, no doubt, but Mortensen was being held for murder, not financial dishonesty.

It may be that the man would have won to

IN GENERAL

freedom had it not been for the second of the sub-normal happenings, that of Mrs. Mortensen's talking in her sleep, for the nocturnal voice of the woman proved as deadly to the accused as though it had been Hay himself speaking from the grave. Faced by her sister with what she had unconsciously let fall in her sleep, Mrs. Mortensen broke down and made a statement that was damning to her husband's meagre chances of acquittal. Hay, she told the police, had called as desired for the money and had been paid in gold coins which her husband had kept in jars in the cellar. After Hay had signed the receipt the two men had left the house together and, later, when her husband had returned, she had seen at once by his manner that something was wrong. For Peter Mortensen had fallen on his knees and begged her to pray with him for the safety of his soul. And then, having attended to the spiritual angle, he had applied himself to the material and had begged his wife never to mention to a soul that he had accompanied Hay outside when the young man left. And Mrs. Mortensen had loyally kept her promise till her secret had been wrested from her from beyond the portals of sleep.

A wife cannot testify against her husband, but in this case there was no necessity. Her subconscious tongue had uncovered enough evidence to show the police the way they should go. The meshes of the net closed in upon him and, still protesting his

CORPUS DELICTI

innocence, Peter Mortensen entered the execution yard. The case is a curious one as being one of the few since the murder of Maria Martin in the Red Barn where a dream has assisted justice in bringing a murderer to justice. Another case was that of Hugh Macleod in the Highlands, which has already been told in these pages.

In the year 1916 there were discovered buried in the woods near Budapest two bodies that were at once identified as those of two women who had, three years previously, been the subject of police enquiries. These women had disappeared under suspicious circumstances, but there is no doubt that the enquiries were interrupted by the outbreak of the Great War, which disorganised the Hungarian police services, or otherwise the matter would presumably have been probed deeper than it was. But, War or no War, the discovery in 1916 made it imperative that the case be reopened and the murderer brought to justice. Rumour came at once to the assistance of the authorities. A little before the commencement of hostilities a man named Kiss had taken a large house in the suburbs of Buda and had lived there for a while with his wife. He kept pretty much to himself but was well enough liked by his neighbours. When, later, his wife disappeared and it was announced that she had run away with an artist lover, Kiss became seriously ill and although he protested as long as he could against this arrangement, a nurse

IN GENERAL

from the village was at last summoned to attend him. It was the gossip that this woman set in motion that came to the ears of the police when the bodies were dug up in the vicinity of Kiss's house.

Suspicion that became certainty fastened on Kiss, but it was too late to bring the murderer to book. He had been called to the colours and had been fortunate enough to meet death on the field of battle instead of on the scaffold, a merciful dispensation of which he most certainly was by no means worthy. A search of his house brought to light a ghastly story, and in his garden were found the graves of some twenty-six victims, all women bearing marks of strangulation and all supposed to have belonged to the leisured classes. A further grimness was added by the discovery of five or six casks of alcohol in a cellar, in each of which was preserved the remains of still more unfortunates. Kiss's method had been, from evidence found in his house, the old-established one of matrimonial advertisements that had appeared in the newspapers of Budapest and Vienna, and it seems strange that the police had not already run the mass murderer to earth, so obvious are the traps set in the wording of these advertisements.

Gangsters as a rule give little thought to the disposal of the folk they have "bumped off." Poor little Marie Grichock was done to death by means of a telephone flex wrenched from its fastenings and wound about her little white neck—the

CORPUS DELICTI

thugs of Old India handing on their methods to the thugs of the New World—and yet Marie had done no harm. She had merely made a somewhat indiscreet enquiry from some of her acquaintances as to the whereabouts of two of her friends, Florence and Ethel—their other names do not matter—who had accompanied two of her boy-friends on a spree. There had been a third man included in that drinking party but he had not stayed long: in fact it was in his honour that the party had been given. It was also his swan-song, for Cowboy Wallace, the honoured guest, had in some way overstepped the code of gangdom and was to be taken for a ride. But the two men entrusted with the execution saw no reason why they should not combine business with pleasure, hence the presence of Ethel and Florence. Marie was not included in the party and so preserved her life for a few short days. Cowboy Wallace was discovered shortly after riddled with bullets by a lonely roadside and it was, no doubt, this discovery that prompted the unfortunate Marie to ask the indiscreet questions referred to. Her answer was the telephone flex. But by her murder, the spark had been set to the trail of rumour, and it was not long before the other girls were found buried beneath a few inches of earth at the side of a lane in Pennsylvania. Buried where they had fallen under a hail of lead from a Thomson gun, buried in the finery for which they had sold their tawdry little souls.



"Acme."

THE ROADSIDE GRAVE OF THE GIRLS WHO KNEW TOO MUCH.

IN GENERAL

The headlines of the newspapers told the whole story in six words : " The Girls Who Knew Too Much." Poor Ethel and Florence had just happened to stumble on the secret of Cowboy Wallace's bumping-off and their companions were taking no chances. There can be little doubt that their killers were known to the police, but they succeeded in going to ground. The spirit of gangdom holds, and in a little while they will come creeping back to their underworld haunts and take their places once more in the night life of New York. And they will find no dearth of those who are ready and willing to stand in the little shoes of the girls who knew too much.

A pretty problem for the police, for these molls and wives of the underworld are quite as quick on the draw, in some cases, as are their boy-friends. Like the gangsters themselves, they have come to believe that they are safe, that the law is powerless to touch them. There's little Virgie, ex-milliner and waitress of Thirty-eighth Street, who went a-gunning so that she could raise money to bail her lover out of the Tombs. " I love him and he loves me," she told Magistrate Erwin. " It's dead easy to get a gun in lil ole Noo York. Am I sorry ? I'll say I'm not." That's the way Virgie sees it. Then there was Lottie Coll, Sing Sing widow of Vincent the Thug. It was not suggested at her trial that she herself had pulled a trigger, but Lottie had certainly been in the company of those who

CORPUS DELICTI

had, when a bullet that was intended for a money-lender on whom the gang had placed the finger went wide and killed a perfectly innocent passer-by. The Coll family seem to be singularly unfortunate in this matter of shooting. It will be remembered that her late lamented husband killed two or three children playing on the Harlem side-walk who were unlucky enough to be in his line of fire. And what a fuss the newspapers made about Norma Millen, suspected of being the brains behind the exploits of her gunman husband, Murt Millen. Refined, beautiful, cultured and not nineteen at the time of Murt's arrest on that Sunday morning in the vestibule of the Lincoln Hotel, this daughter of a Massachusetts clergyman found herself facing widowhood by the electric chair almost before her honeymoon was over. Sob-sisters of the sensational Press fought for her life-story, every detail of her likes and dislikes were served up hot each morning to an eager public. Her pitiable little history was dragged into the arena to make a reader's holiday. And Norma enjoyed it all hugely. She was news ! Smilingly she posed for her picture. Low voiced, she told of her girlhood's days in the dear old vicarage. She even asked the governor of the prison if she might be allowed parole so that she could attend Divine service in her father's place of worship. And what a crowd there would have been in that little church had her request been granted.

IN GENERAL

Who are these girls? What fatal fascination do these thugs of the trigger hold over them? They present a tough problem, almost as tough a problem as the gangsters themselves. For your girl who has "gone gangster" will rob a bank with the best of them and, like the cigar-smoking Bonnie Parker, can be pretty handy with a gun or blackjack if needs be. Just as the modern gangster is the follower of his hooligan forerunners of the Fourth Ward and the Five Points, so the girls are the marcelled, manicured followers of Hell Cat Maggie and the harridans of the old Bowery. Rags have given place to silks, tenements to palatial flats, but they are sisters under the skin. Their lives are short. For a little season they flutter their spangled wings in the garish life of Manhattan; then like pale little ghosts they slink down the corridors of the underworld to—where? Some to the river. Some to prison or criminal asylum. Some to the despairing death of the drug addict. Many to lie as Ethel and Florence lay beneath the soil, the pitiful *corpus delicti* of sensational murder trials.

And every one of them *somebody's* daughter.

II

Burial played a tragic part in the story of Soran Qvist who was the pastor of a tiny village named Veilby on the Jutland peninsula. There was no one in the whole of Denmark who was more loved

CORPUS DELICTI

or respected than Qvist although there was much to overlook in his manner towards his village flock. Although there was in the man an undoubted Jekyll and Hyde complex there was no evil other than that of a hasty temper, and this, unfortunately, was at times almost ungovernable. His was the stern discipline of the ancient church and he, apparently, thought it no more than his duty to chastise where chastisement was due. Many a delinquent had Soren Qvist to thank for a punishment that, had they escaped the pastor's stick, might have meant their appearing before a magistrate and receiving a term of imprisonment.

But no one knew this failing more than the man himself, and on sensing that his fits of temper were coming on he would shut himself away in his study as though fearing that his feelings would get the better of him and lead him into mischief. It was almost as though Qvist believed himself possessed of a devil with whom he had to grapple alone and unaided. The period of obsession having passed the pastor would once more be his own benevolent self with open house, day and night, and help for all who came to ask him for it. And although the man was respected and loved it is easily understood that these acts of violence left behind them many a sting, and when at last tragedy descended on the man there were not wanting witnesses only too ready to testify against him.

The pastor's wife had long been dead, and the

man's whole world was centred on his flock and on his daughter Nora, a comely girl of twenty ; and many were the offers received by Soren Qvist for her hand. The most persistent of her admirers was a neighbouring farmer named Morten Bruns, a despicable character who had supplemented his wealth by means of usury and double-dealing. Bruns appears to have been a domineering sort of person who had the idea that money could buy anything, and his courtship of the fair Nora was more in the nature of a demand than a request for her hand. The time came when the pastor felt it his duty to forbid Morten the house, and it is said that he even threatened to administer corporal punishment if his wishes were disobeyed. Morten was forced to retire, but he retired swearing the vengeance of the damned against Soren Qvist.

Shortly after this Morten's brother Neils appeared at the parsonage with a sad tale of unemployment and destitution. His brother, he told the pastor, would not help him and, hearing this, Qvist—whose remorse and repentance after his temperamental outbursts were sincere enough—saw in Neils's visit a means of atoning for his harsh treatment of Morten. With this laudable object in view Neils was offered work in the gardens and on the farm attached to the parsonage. But it proved a bad bargain. The blood of the Bruns revolted at honest work and Qvist soon found that his generosity had been abused. Again his temper flared up

CORPUS DELICTI

and in a fit of rage at Neils's idleness and insolence he attacked the man in one of the meadows and threatened him with a thorough-paced beating if he did not mend his ways. But Neils did not wait for that. With an oath he leapt the hedge and ran for his life.

Much to the pastor's relief the man did not come back, and the life of Veilby went on its peaceful way. But then, some days after Neils had deserted, Morten again made his appearance at the parsonage. But this time it was not to renew his courtship, it was merely to ask Soren Qvist if he could inform him as to the whereabouts of his brother Neils. The parson told the whole story, but Morten shook his head. He had been informed by two women, who had been looking over the hedge at the time, of his brutal attack upon the defenceless Neils and his threats of worse to come. Again the parson denied all knowledge of the missing man from the moment he had leapt the hedge, and again he showed his visitor the door. Then Morten shot his bolt.

Without mincing matters he told Soren Qvist that it was thought in the village that Neils had been murdered and, that being so, there was, in Morten's opinion, not very far to seek for the murderer. The statements of the two women and various other witnesses Morten could produce, pointed direct to the parson as being guilty. And, having planted his barb, Morten left. The

IN GENERAL

rumours grew. Rewards were offered and various people questioned. Morten made no attempt to hide his suspicions. Pastor Qvist had murdered his brother, he asserted, and had buried him, and if it meant the digging up of the whole of Denmark the body must be found. A week or so passed and then Morten acted again.

He appeared before a magistrate demanding the arrest of the pastor. He quoted the witnesses he had interviewed and then produced a half-witted farm hand, named Larsen, who swore that one night on his way to the village he had passed the parsonage and had seen a figure digging in the garden under cover of the darkness. He had crept closer and although he could not swear that the digger was the parson he described the man as having been wearing a green dressing-gown, a type of garment that was well known to all Veilby as being habitually worn by the pastor. This evidence could not very well be passed over and the pastor was questioned. He stoutly denied that he had ever dug his garden by night and begged the authorities to make a search. This was done.

Buried in a shallow grave at the identical spot pointed out by Larsen was found a body of a man, a man whose face was too badly decomposed to be recognisable, but whose clothes were undoubtedly those of the missing Neils Bruns. The arrest and accusation of Soren Qvist was, after that, a foregone conclusion.

CORPUS DELICTI

The evidence was damning. A servant maid in the house swore that she had heard a door open during the night of which Larsen spoke and that in the darkness she had seen the shadow of a man in a dressing-gown leaving the pastor's room. The two women testified to the violence of Qvist's manner towards the missing man and, what was more to the point, Soren Qvist confessed to the crime. For in the poor man's mind was no doubt that in one of his fits of rage he had attacked Neils Bruns, killed him and buried the body in his garden. That he could remember nothing of the crime weighed not at all with the conscience-stricken man. He knew that in his boyhood he had once killed a dog because the little animal angered him. He knew, too, that once during sleep he had written a sermon of which he remembered nothing on waking. It was abundantly clear to Soren Qvist that his malady had taken a step forward and become more acute. The devil with whom he had wrestled alone for days at a time in his study had at last mastered him and made of him a murderer.

Qvist was condemned to death. But the love that was borne him by the people of Veilby could not bear the thought of their beloved pastor being executed, and petition after petition was presented to the local authorities, and even to Copenhagen, but they were of no avail. This is accounted for, in part, by the reluctance of the condemned man

IN GENERAL

to accept a pardon for the sin he believed he had committed. To a man of his piety it is quite understandable that he preferred the gallows to a life throughout which he must ever be haunted by the knowledge that he had spilled human blood. From all petitions for a reprieve he withheld his support. An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth. He had taken life, and therefore his own life was forfeit, and he was ready to face his Maker. Even when certain sympathisers offered to provide him with the means of escape from Grenaa Prison, in which he was incarcerated, and promised to have ready a ship to take him to Sweden and safety, the good man rejected the proposal with a smile of pious resignation.

With head erect Soren Qvist faced his doom. He was executed on the Hill of the Ravens and buried in the churchyard of Aalsoe. On his headstone is graven :

UNDER THIS STONE REPOSES

SOREN QVIST

Who suffered unjustly for a crime
he never committed, victim of
a foul plot, unhappy sport of
blind justice.

It was over twenty years before the truth became known. Then there arrived at the door of the parsonage a stranger to Veilby begging alms. The

CORPUS DELICTI

man was ill, ragged and destitute and, curiously enough, to the pastor who had succeeded Soren Qvist he put precisely the same query as another visitor had put to that unfortunate man twenty years earlier : he asked after the whereabouts of a brother. It was then that the pastor recognised a likeness in the beggar to a man named Morten Bruns who had recently died in the neighbourhood. On hearing that Morten was dead the stranger collapsed, and then told the ghastly story of betrayal that is remembered in Denmark to this day.

The stranger was Neils Bruns and he had come to Veilby to discover why certain payments that he had been receiving regularly from Morten had suddenly ceased. He had been bribed to leave the village, he said, and on condition that he never returned or made himself known a remittance was to be paid to him. Morten's death had cancelled the bargain and now Neils was free to speak.

It had been a dastardly plot. From the moment of Neils's application to the parson for employment the conspiracy had been engineered by Morten Bruns in revenge for his being forbidden to approach Nora Qvist. Knowing the pastor's temper he had judged—and judged rightly—that it would be but a matter of time before his brother's idleness would rouse his master to threats or perhaps to physical violence. It had all fallen out as he had hoped, and Morten had then planned the pastor's destruction with a devilish ingenuity. The robbery of a

IN GENERAL

grave in the churchyard was nothing to Morten and the digging and reburial a simple operation in the darkness and solitude of the parsonage garden. The women who had witnessed the threats, the unspeakable Larsen who had watched the digging, all were nails in the pastor's coffin. Even the poor serving maid who had seen Morten wearing the gown he was borrowing for his purpose was deadly in her evidence. For Morten, knowing that the parson kept open doors night and day, had had no difficulty in entering while Qvist was asleep and purloining the green dressing-gown that he made sure would be seen by others. Surely revenge could go no further.

There was a somewhat similar case in Germany some years ago, where two men killed and buried in the Black Forest a travelling jewellery salesman. Returning to their homes with their spoil they both proposed marriage to the same girl, a village beauty with whom both the men had long been in love. The girl had to make her choice, and that choice so angered the rejected suitor that he at once informed the police regarding the body buried in the forest. He made a full confession and the men were hanged together on the same scaffold, the informer being quite willing to leave this world so long as he could drag his rival down with him into eternity.

One of the longest periods during which a body has remained concealed, must be in the case of

CORPUS DELICTI

M. D. Landis, but his was a case of self-disposal. Early in the century the Oregon country was aflame with a series of crimes for which the murderer, although known, was never brought to book. Landis was a salesman in the employ of a stove company, and on his visits round the countryside to outlying farms and ranches he worked a sideline that must have brought him in a great deal of money. His method was to establish friendly relations with ranchers who were possessed of money and to promise to let them in on a good proposition in connection with a timber deal. Tempted by the lure of sudden wealth, the victim would accompany Landis into town and put up at one of the hotels, from which they would set out together to view the site of the timber transaction. But Landis inevitably returned alone with the story that his friend had decided to go back home and had asked Landis to pay his hotel bill for him. This cunning little touch by which the landlord received his money was a stroke of genius, and in this and in the desolation of the Oregon country at that time lay Landis' safety. But although the police were aware of the man's activities they never succeeded in bringing him to book. It was only when the hunt became too hot that the murderer returned to the scene of his killings and put an end to his own life. It is a strange ruling of fate that while so many men with every chance in their hands so seldom succeed in disposing of a body, this

IN GENERAL

man, by the selection of his own death location, succeeded in hiding that death from the world for twenty-three years. Among the tangled underbrush of a mountainside, hemmed in by trackless forests of spruce and fir, the body of M. D. Landis lay undisturbed from May, 1907, till 1930.

III

Never, perhaps, has the search for a body been so sensational a news item as that for the mortal remains of Alexander Stewart in the year 1878. Here was no case of murder, for Stewart had died quite peacefully in his bed in his magnificent mansion in New York, and had been duly buried in the Church of St. Marks in the Bowery. Visitors to the city to-day will be well acquainted with the vast store of A. Wannamakers on Lower Broadway, but few will know that the originator of that vast business was the Stewart who became a greater feature in the newspapers in death than ever he had been in life. Forty times a millionaire, Alexander Stewart was one of the first great merchant princes of the New World, and it may be superfluous to say that he was Irish and that he had in his veins a touch of the Scots.

The kidnapping of men already dead may be a profitable business but it must also be a very nauseating one. Stewart had been buried over two years and even the police investigators were loath to

CORPUS DELICTI

enter the vault in which was the pillaged casket of the dead millionaire. Curiously enough, a few months previous to the outrage an attempt had been made to force the Stewart tomb but it had not been successful, and in order to frustrate any further attempt the body had been removed, the slab of stone that covered the vault and bore the inscription had been taken up and sunk into the grass some yards from its original position, and the patch over the tomb had been turfed over and left uncharted.

But the ghouls were evidently very well informed as to the position of the body, and on a dark November night in the year 1878 the turf was raised and digging operations commenced with the object of reaching the covering of the vault. The three coffins were opened and the body removed, the silver trappings of the outer casket being also taken away, together with a triangular piece of the lining of the inner coffin. The outrage was discovered early the next morning by the sexton on his rounds of the churchyard.

And then began a hue and cry for a body that created a greater stir than has any search for the *corpus delicti* of a murder. The thieves had been smart and had managed to remove their loathsome burden safely into hiding. To this day it is not known where the cadaver was hidden, but before very long there came the tentative suggestions from the kidnappers as to ransom. Had it not been for Judge Hilton, one of the trustees of the

IN GENERAL

Stewart estate, they would have had an easy victory acting as they did on the susceptibilities of the octogenarian widow, who could not endure the thought of her beloved husband's remains not being at rest. Gladly would she have paid the sum demanded, two hundred and fifty thousand dollars, but the trustee was obdurate. When at last the bag of bones was handed over, the ransom had shrunk to the comparatively insignificant sum of twenty thousand dollars. Alexander now lies buried safely in some place that is known only to a few and it is not likely that he will be further disturbed. Many theories were put forward as to the reason for the outrage, and it may be that Judge Hilton's dislike of the people of Jewry be the reason. Hilton was instrumental in forbidding the entry of the Jews as guests into the Grand Union Hotel in Saratoga, built and owned by Alexander Stewart, and it is well known that there was a Hebrew boycotting of the Lower Broadway store in consequence. It may be that there was among the great number of Jews in New York a few who carried their hatred beyond the grave, and had not hesitated to make financial capital out of their dead oppressor.

And now for the story of "The Man Who Was Dead But Who Wouldn't Lie Down." Disposal in the case of Mike Molloy was quite unnecessary as Mike himself saw to it that there should be nothing to dispose of. For to dispose of a corpse

CORPUS DELICTI

it is essential that a corpse must be obtained. Fire, water, burial, acids, all might have been tried by the two fiends Marino and Pasqua, but their first problem was the death of their victim. A certain speakeasy keeper named Tony Marino in the Bronx district of Manhattan had as a bosom friend one Frank Pasqua who ran what is known in the States as a mortician's parlour, in other words Pasqua was an undertaker and with him business had of late been somewhat bad. As a matter of fact, business was bad with both Tony and Frankie, the depression that was attacking New York at that time affecting both the quick and the dead, for not only did one have to cut down on one's alcoholic enjoyment, but also on the trappings of death. But the two men were on the brink of a discovery that they fondly thought would bring much grist to their respective mills, and on a certain winter night in 1932 we see them in conference in the seclusion of the back room of Tony's saloon. A slice of luck had come Tony's way. A prostitute who had been in the habit of frequenting the saloon had had the misfortune to develop pneumonia after a particularly violent outburst of heavy drinking and, by great good luck, Tony Marino had held an insurance policy on the girl's life. That the unfortunate lady had been found stark naked and with wide open windows in Tony's house with the mercury below zero does not seem to have struck the insurance people as suspicious, and it was no

IN GENERAL

doubt the ease with which the company paid up that suggested to Tony that with the aid of Frankie the operation might quite safely be repeated if only they could happen upon a subject as promising from an insurance point of view as the lady had been. This victim was soon forthcoming in the person of Mike Molloy, and it was not long before his prospective murderers were wishing they had waited a little and found a less tough proposition. Till this time Mike had been far from welcome in the speakeasy, his consumption of whisky being illimitable and his ability to pay infinitesimal. But, after a conference in Tony's back room, Mike found, much to his surprised delight, that he had suddenly become an honoured guest. No word now as to payment for the liquor he consumed, and Mike entered on a period of alcoholic bliss the like of which he had never even dreamed of.

But it was not long before Tony and Frankie decided that Mike's response was not quite what had been expected. That this homeless, friendless down-and-out would one snowy night be found dead on the sidewalk had been to them a foregone conclusion, but it was certainly no foregone conclusion to Mike Molloy. The Irishman seemed actually to thrive on the stuff they handed over the bar to him night after night. Something clearly had to be done. The liquor was changed, and in place of the good rye whisky a vile concoction

CORPUS DELICTI

of which wood alcohol and benzine were the basic ingredients was substituted. Again Mike seemed to thrive on the treatment. In fact he congratulated his hosts on their new estimate of what liquor really should be. The new stuff, he told them, had a kick in it. Tony and Frankie became definitely anxious. Still another premium was nearly due and funds were low, and it had never entered into their wildest calculations that they would be called on to pay more than the first premium, or two at most. It was then that Tony had the brain wave about the sardines. He had read somewhere that sardines, if kept in an opened tin for a few weeks, underwent a change from a harmless article of food into a poison of a most virulent type. Why not, he asked Frankie, try this on Mike? But to make matters sure, for Mike was by now regarded as practically impervious to any poison that would attack an ordinary man, Tony carefully ground up portions of the tin lid of the container and mixed the powdered metal with the sardine into a paste in preparing the sandwiches with which he regaled his guest. But nothing happened. Mike was not very strong on food anyway, and the few sandwiches he took failed to make the slightest impression on the man's iron-bound constitution. Again Tony and Frankie went into conference and this time they co-opted a taxi-driver named Hershey Green, who, when told of their new plan for eliminating Mr. Molloy,

IN GENERAL

agreed enthusiastically to assist them in every way in his power. So the next night, when Mike, full of powdered metal, infected sardine, benzine and wood alcohol, was deemed to be sufficiently under their combined influence not to know or care what happened, he was offered a ride to the shack he called home, an offer which was gratefully accepted by the intoxicated man.

Mike Molloy was driven to a lonely road on the outskirts of Manhattan where a thick belt of trees grew down to the highway. Here he was deposited on the roadway and Green then proceeded to drive his cab over the prostrate man. Then, not liking to leave the body where it might be found before they had made their getaway, the three decided to make an even greater certainty of the job by dragging Mike into the shelter of the trees where, opening his coat and shirt, they poured cold water over him and allowed it to freeze, a process that, considering that it was midwinter, was not a lengthy one. Then the men returned to Tony's to see that the policy was in order and all ready for presentation of claim.

The next morning, discreet enquiries were instituted at hospitals and mortuaries in the Bronx district, but no institution seemed to have received any corpse even remotely resembling Mike Molloy. And then all doubt was set at rest by the appearance of Mike himself at the speakeasy requesting a really man's-sized drink as he felt he needed it. He

CORPUS DELICTI

seemed to have met with some sort of accident the night before, he informed his hosts, and he was afraid he had contracted a slight chill. At this Tony and Frankie, labouring no doubt under a conviction that fate had dealt hardly with them, lost their heads. Their next attempt was drastic and foolhardy, the insertion of a gas tube in the mouth of Mr. Molloy while in a drunken slumber. It succeeded this time, but there could be little doubt in the minds of the insurance people when the claim was made as to the responsible parties. Not only had the death taken place in a room that had been rented by Tony, through his bartender Red Murphy, but the certificate of death stated pneumonia as being the cause, the same fell ailment as that by whose agency the unfortunate street-walker had succumbed.

It took these two men, assisted by others, some weeks to send Mike Molloy to his account. It took a middle-aged gentleman in a bowler hat up at Sing Sing precisely one-hundredth part of a split second to perform a like office for Mr. Frank Pasqua and Mr. Tony Marino. It is comforting to know that Red Murphy and a man named Kreisberg, who had played a star part in the tragedy, accompanied them to the chair.

A curious form of disposal and one that might, had the murderer been able to act alone, have succeeded was that favoured by a certain Monsieur Duprez in Berne. Duprez had harboured a grudge

IN GENERAL

for some time against his brother-in-law, who had refused to lend him money. Whether the crime was committed in the heat of the moment or whether it had been premeditated is not recorded, but the time came when Monsieur Duprez was faced with the task of getting rid of the body. His scheme was ingenious to say the least. He took into his confidence certain of his servants and together they carried the body of the murdered man outside the town and here, on the highway, they stood waiting in the shadows till they were sure that others were within earshot. Then the servants and their master staged a violent quarrel in which shots were fired and oaths bandied back and forth with vigour. They then dispersed, leaving the murdered man lying on the roadway. The ruse succeeded beyond the killer's wildest hopes and not a breath of suspicion attached to Duprez, it being taken for granted that the victim had been killed in fair fight. It was then that he made the inevitable mistake. Thinking himself quite clear he sought to tighten the position by throwing doubts on the quarrel theory and offering a large reward for the apprehension of the murderer. And, knowing that there was little love lost between the two men, the police instituted enquiries as to the reason for this generous action. From that moment the carefully built up structure of Monsieur Duprez came tumbling down like a house of cards.

CORPUS DELICTI

And the grim game of hide-and-seek goes on. From the bowels of the earth they come, these ghosts of murdered men and women, from the deep waters, from the ashes of consuming fires to point the accusing finger, and then to troop back into the shadows where they belong. . . .

THE END

